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"We've a scrub nine playing against us."

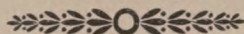
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WARD HILL AT WESTON

A STORY OF AMERICAN SCHOOL LIFE

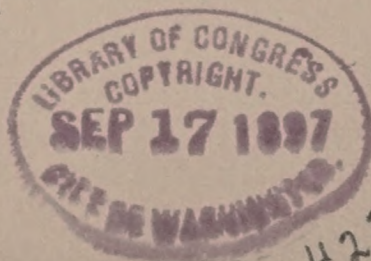
BY
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"Three Colonial Boys," "Three Young Continentals,"
"Tecumseh's Young Braves," "Washington's Young Aids,"
"Guarding the Frontier," etc.



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From the Press of the
American Baptist Publication Society

PREFACE

WHO that has been fortunate enough to enjoy the privileges of school life does not recall with a feeling of special tenderness the break in life which came when he first left home? Behind him lay the love which shielded, the care which guarded, and the strength upon which he could rely. Before him was the unknown world of school life, in which he was forced to depend upon himself rather than upon others. Indirectly, all the past still aided, but alone he must meet the temptations and face the questions of right and duty.

And school life has its own peculiar temptations, its own standards of right and wrong, and pronounces its own judgments. It has lessons outside the class-room, and teaches many things not outlined in the catalogue.

Into this life, where a boy first finds himself thrust, he is often at a loss to know in which way to go. Then it is that the earlier lessons, learned in the home, aid in solving his problems; but in the new surroundings and the testings of power which are certain to come, and in the final decision as to the direction which

his life shall take, each boy is compelled to rely upon himself and not upon another.

The basis of each chapter in this book is taken from real life, and I have endeavored to make it all conform to life as it is. Some of these chapters are not as I would have them, but I have tried to have them just as the life is. I have not drawn a moral, but trust that my readers will have no difficulty in drawing their own. Most healthy boys have an instinctive hatred of all that is cowardly and mean, not to say vicious and low; and if in reading this record they shall be led to value the power of decision and of the bravery required to adhere to what they believe to be right, the labor of preparing it will not have been in vain. Indeed, if the book can be said to have a purpose it is none other than that.

I hasten to say also, that in tracing the course of one of the characters, I have not intended in the slightest degree to reflect upon one of the highest and holiest callings of life. Just because it is the highest and holiest of all, I believe that the young men who enter it ought to be those who adorn it. I very frankly acknowledge that I have followed the leadings of another writer in describing this special character, and yet—alas that I must say it—I have met him in my own life and taught him in my own classes. The contrast between him and some of the other boys who were seeking the

same high calling is not overdrawn. It is only the valuable which is ever counterfeited.

Success is not easily won. Every good thing has its own price, and only those who are willing to pay it, gain it. Even Zion is spoken of as a "mount," and the life which does not go against the current is sure to go down the stream.

It has been a pleasure to me to live over this life with the boys at Weston, and if the younger readers, and perhaps the older as well, share in this labor of love, it will be reward enough to know that it was not "love's labor lost."

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON.

1897.

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WARD HILL AT WESTON

CHAPTER I

ENTERING WESTON

“ IS this the stage for Weston ? ”

“ Yes ; going to the academy ? ”

“ We hope to. ”

“ That’s right, ” and the speaker stretched forth his hand and gave a cordial shake to each of the two boys before him. “ Better give your checks to the driver and he’ll see to your trunks. Here, give them to me, and I’ll look after them for you. Where are you going to room ? ”

“ In West Hall. ”

“ Here, Tom, take these checks and leave the trunks at West Hall. I suppose all the baggage will have to come over in another wagon, won’t it ? ” Their new friend had already taken their checks, and was talking familiarly with the good-natured Irishman who was the driver of the stage which ran between Weston and Dorrfield, its nearest railway station.

“ That’s what they will, Speckle. We’ve a crowd going over to-day, ” replied the driver.

“ Have many of the fellows got back yet ? ”

“Yes, Weston’s full of ’em ; they say it’s going to be a big year for the school.”

“Mighty glad to hear it. Now, fellows,” he said turning again to the boys, “let’s make for the top of his old cart ; that’s the place to be in, and we’ll have to be quick about it too.”

In a moment all three of the boys scrambled up to the top of the lumbering old stage, and joined the half-dozen boys who already were seated there. On the platform of the station there was a bustling crowd, in which boys of their own age seemed to predominate. Some were accompanied by their fathers or mothers, and there was a busy scene as they moved about selecting the various pieces of baggage, and making arrangements for its transportation to Weston.

In a brief time order was brought out of the chaos, the stage was filled to its utmost capacity, the driver had mounted to his place which the boys on top of the stage had reserved for him, there was a snapping of the whip, and the last portion of Ward Hill’s journey had begun.

He and his friend Henry Boyd had been traveling since early morning, and the sun was beginning to sink behind the hills when they started out of Dorrfield on the top of the old stage coach. There was to be a ride of three miles to Weston and then the new life, of which they had been dreaming for a few months past, would begin. Already the first phases of it could be seen, for the most of the occupants of the stage coach evidently were going to the same place, and the boys were shouting and laughing as they greeted one another at the close

of the long summer vacation and came back to enter on the new year.

In all the world there is no more stirring sight than that of a group of schoolboys when they come together as had these among whom Ward Hill now found himself. Ward himself shared in the feeling, and although he felt somewhat out of place in the midst of the strangers, there yet was a thrill as he thought that he was really one of the company, and the life was soon to be his, even as it was now theirs.

The few older people in the stage also felt the contagion of the young life, and with benignant faces watched the boys as they shouted and laughed, although doubtless not one of the number could have explained the cause of the hilarity. The lumbering coach was rattling as it moved up the hillsides and down through the valleys, drawn by the four horses which the driver handled as if such work were a matter of every-day life.

“What was it the driver called you?” said Ward to the boy who had aided him at the station, and who now was seated by his side.

“Speckle,” replied the lad laughing. “And you’d never guess why.” He removed his hat for a moment and ran his fingers through his hair, which was of a decidedly reddish tinge. His face was covered with freckles, and he good-humoredly spoke of them as the source of the name by which he had been addressed. “My name’s Jack Hobart; but nobody in Weston would know who was meant if you spoke of him. If you say Speckle, or Speck, I guess most everybody’d understand it, though. What did you say your name was?”

“Ward Hill ; and this is my chum, Henry Boyd.” “Chum” was a new word in his vocabulary, but it sounded well, and might serve to impress his new friend with the fact that, although he was a new-comer, he was already familiar with some portions of school life. And Ward was already impressed by the bearing of his companion. He had noticed that his clothes were of a far more fashionable make than his own, and there was a self-possession and a ready assurance which to Ward, who had been living in a country village, seemed quite remarkable.

“My mother doesn’t like my school name,” said Jack laughingly. “She declares my hair is not red, only a bit golden ; and as for the speckles, she says she can’t find ’em. But I guess the fellows know. They have a way of getting up names that don’t always come out in the catalogue, and I guess as far as names go, they’re a little nearer the truth than some of those you see in print. Then you’re going to room in West, are you ?”

“Yes. Why, isn’t that all right ?”

“Oh, it’s all right enough ; only I didn’t just think you’d fit in there.”

“Where do you room ?” inquired Ward.

“Me ? Oh, I room in East. Most of the fellows you’ll want to know room there.”

Ward could not explain it, but there was a feeling of discontent already in his heart. He had never been in Weston, and the school life was all new to him. His father had made all the arrangements by correspondence for his coming, and had sent the lad off alone

with his long-time friend, Henry Boyd, declaring to his mother, who entered her mild protest, that it would "do the youngsters good to be thrown upon their own resources."

The rooms in West Hall did not rent for so much as those in the East Hall, and as the matter of expense was a considerable one in the Hill household, the cheaper rooms at once had been selected. And Ward had entered no protest, knowing full well the struggle it would be to send him away to school. But already there was a little feeling of discontent arising even before he had seen the school. His well-dressed and confident companion had implied rather than spoken his feeling that West Hall sheltered the boys whom he would not care for as he would for those who roomed in East Hall.

The thought made Ward silent for a time, and he gazed at the hills all about him. His home had been near the seashore, and mountains were something upon which he had never looked before. Here and there patches of lighter-colored foliage could be seen upon the green of the hillsides, which spoke of the coming of the autumn. The quiet and rugged beauty, the calm and even majestic appearance of some of the highest hills, or mountains as the people there termed them, impressed him; and yet in the fading light of that September day there was a lonesomeness, or discontent, or something he could not just define, creeping over him. Perhaps the mountains were the cause of it, he thought; they seemed to shut him out from the world. Certainly it was all far different from the wide stretch of the blue ocean which had greeted his eyes every morning in his home.

The contrast carried him back in his thoughts to his home again. He could see the narrow, crooked, winding little street that comprised most of the village of Rockford, in which he had been born and where all of his sixteen years of life had been spent. He could see the little house of his father, all painted white except for the green blinds, which were almost exactly like those of all the houses in the village. Just now the family must be at their evening meal. And he was gone. He swallowed a lump in his throat, and thought of the long talk he had had with his mother the night before he left, and how he had promised her that he would do his best in every way for her sake as well as his own.

Then there arose the picture of the little parsonage in which Dr. Boyd had lived for twenty years. His kind, benignant face must have been like Henry's when he was young, thought Ward, as he glanced for a moment at his friend, who was listening to the words of Speckle. He was talking most of the time and evidently trying to impress the new boy. Just how Henry was taking it all Ward could not judge. But he thought again of his father, and how he and Henry for the last six months had been reciting in Latin and Greek daily to the kind old man who had told them with the greatest confidence, that now they could go up to Weston for a year, and then find they would be all ready for college. And Ward had not doubted his word.

"There's the glen," said Speckle, breaking in upon his thoughts and pointing to a place up the valley. "We've had some high old times there. I'll take you

up some day. I guess you're the kind of fellow to like what goes on there."

"What is it goes on?" inquired Henry.

"Never you mind that. You'll find out in good time. That's the 'hopper' up yonder. The best trout fishing in the country is right there. It's against the law to fish part of the time, so we don't," and he winked slowly with one eye. "Up yonder's where we go for chestnuts, and out beyond there's the best orchard you ever saw. We take turns going out there nights. We'll give you a chance soon."

"What do you do?"

"Oh we borrow a few. The deacon—it's Deacon Spring lives there—rather prefers to come down to the academy and peddle his fruit out by the pint to the boys; but we don't take kindly to it. It's a heap more fun to go up there nights. We can't do such things in New York, you know."

"Do you live in New York?" asked Ward.

"That's what I do. The governor sent me up here because he went to school here when he was a boy. I don't kick. It's good enough, and we manage to pull through somehow. Do you know where you're going to board?"

"Yes," said Henry, "at the Academy Hall."

"At the 'hash-house'? You don't mean it! They'll feed you on veal there three times a day. They'd do it four times, only there aren't enough calves to go 'round."

"We thought that was where all the boys took their meals," said Ward. "Where do you board?"

“At Ma Perrins’. She sets a table for you ! Say, do either of you fellows play ball ?”

“I do, some,” said Ward ; “but Henry’s a crack player.”

“You don’t mean it ! We’re in great need of new stuff on the ‘nine.’ We’ve got to clean out the Burrs this fall, and we’ll give you a chance to show up pretty soon. Over in East we can’t pull out much, but Blake’s in charge of West, and you can fix him.”

Ward was somewhat confused in his mind as to just what his companion meant. What and who were the Burrs ? “Blake,” he surmised, must be Mr. Blake, whom he knew from his father’s correspondence to be the teacher in charge of West Hall ; but all his questions were banished from his mind in a moment as the stage came around the bend in the road and was at once in the little village, or hamlet, of Weston.

And there was the academy. The four buildings were situated in the midst of a campus that comprised several acres. Over on the left was the ball field, and Speckle at once pointed out the various buildings. West Hall and East Hall and the large Science Hall, which Speckle declared some “old boy” had given the school a few years before, were clearly seen ; and Academy Hall, which years before had been the sole building, but now was the “hash house,” where “they fed nothing but veal three times a day,” immediately came into view.

The arrival of the stage was hailed by a crowd of eager boys, who called and laughed, and then broke into a shout that to Ward seemed a union of a war

cry, a hymn, and a sob of pain. To his surprise the boys on the stage took up the shout and gave it back again in exactly the same form.

“That’s the school yell,” said Jack as he leaped down from the stage. “Tom, take these fellows over to West.”

In a moment Jack was the center of a group of eager boys ; the stage had started on again, and soon drew up before the door of West Hall. A man taller than any he had ever seen was standing in the doorway as they came up, and Ward whispered to Henry, “I wonder if that’s Mr. Blake.”

Henry made no reply and the boys quickly leaped down and approached the hall, which for many months was to be their home.

CHAPTER II

NEW FRIENDS

THE tall man was Mr. Blake, as Ward had surmised. He greeted the boys pleasantly, and as soon as he heard their names, directed them to their room and gave them each a key.

Their room was to be on the third floor and was in the front corner. The dim light however prevented them from seeing the number "Seventeen" which Mr. Blake told them they would find painted on the door. There was a man in the hallway lighting the lamps on the side walls, and as they came up the stairs, Ward turned to him and said, "Can you tell us where seventeen is?"

"Sivinteen is it? Indade and I can. It's right before yez."

As the boys were still standing by the stairway the direction was not quite so clear as Ward wished, and he said: "Where did you say it was?"

"Right there in the corner by ye. Ye're new byes I take it. Well, I'll look after ye, young gentlemen. Me name's Michael. I'm the perfessor of dust and ashes. I'm nixt to the principal, I am. Indade, and I've been here longer nor the doctor."

The boys laughed, and as they had found the number on the door now, they quickly entered and stood

inside the room which had been assigned them. "That's the janitor, I take it," said Henry as they closed the door.

"I presume so," replied Ward laughing. "The professor of dust and ashes. That sounds like it anyway."

But they turned now to examine their new abode. There was a little study room, and out of it were two closets. Ward opened the door of each and saw that one was designed for a wardrobe and the other as a coat closet. In addition there were two small sleeping rooms, one for each boy. A narrow little bedstead and a washstand were in each, and only the necessary furniture was in any of the rooms; a small stove, three chairs, a rough study table, and a large lamp which they had lighted as soon as they entered, made up the furnishings of the study room.

"It's pretty bare," said Ward; "not much like home."

"We'll soon have it fixed," replied Henry, "as soon as our trunks come. Here they are now," he added, as he opened the door in response to a rap, and saw the stalwart Michael before him with a trunk on his shoulder.

He lowered his burden, depositing it on the floor, and said: "It's a big load ye have there, young gentlemen. I think it's the doctor I'll be after asking to bring up the other one."

"You're next to him, are you?" said Ward laughing, as he saw the twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, I'm next to the principal. I'm the professor of dust and ashes."

The other trunk was soon brought up and the boys at once opened them, and taking out some fresh clothing, were soon ready to present themselves to Mr. Blake and report for supper.

“You go right over to Academy Hall,” said Mr. Blake, “and you’ll find supper ready for you.”

The boys started across the well-worn path which led to the boarding hall, not quite certain as to what they were to do when they arrived; but on their way they met Jack Hobart with several other boys, and as soon as he recognized them he called out, “On your way to the hash-house? Beware the veal!”

His companions laughed, and Ward, somewhat abashed, replied: “Yes, we’re going there, but we don’t know what to do when we get there.”

“I told you,” and Jack laughed. “Beware the veal, but don’t be afraid. Mrs. Sperry is the matron, and she’ll give you a place at one of the tables. You want to walk right in and make yourselves at home. She’ll do all the rest.”

Jack hastened to rejoin his companions who had gone on before him, and Ward and Henry turned again to follow the path. The sun had long since disappeared from sight, but the evening was light under the full moon and they had no difficulty in finding their way.

The path led them by East Hall, and as they drew near they saw a group of a half-dozen boys standing by the steps which led to one of the entrances, under the large lamp which hung over the doorway and shed its beams on all around.

In the center of the group was a boy larger than any

of the others, and he was telling some story which apparently was delighting his fellows. His face was bold and coarse, and as he turned to look at the approaching boys, he gazed at them curiously for a moment, and as soon as they passed he called out : "Seeds ! Seeds ! H-a-a-y-seeds !"

A laugh followed his call, and his companions at once joined in the cry, "Seeds ! Seeds ! H-a-a-y-seeds !"

Ward felt that his face flushed, but neither he nor Henry made any reply. It had been apparent to them both when they had passed the group that they must belong to the wealthier class of boys in the school ; but they had not been prepared for the rude and brutal salutation which they had received.

Henry apparently had not been moved by the call, but the feeling of discontent which Ward had felt in the company of Speckle, as they rode over to Weston on the old stage-coach, returned. It was a new experience to him, and not at all a pleasant one, but he forgot it for the moment as they approached the dining hall and entered the open door.

The matron, Mrs. Sperry, was in waiting there, and after cordially greeting the new boys, at once led the way to the dining room. Ward saw as he entered that the room seemed to be about half filled with students, and he also noticed several men there whom he at once concluded must be teachers.

"This will be your table, young gentlemen," said Mrs. Sperry, as she assigned them seats and introduced them to the boys who already were seated there.

Ward found himself at one end of the table while Henry was seated at his right. On his left was a boy somewhat older than he, but whose pleasant face and cordial manner made him forget his irritation at the call of the East Hall boys, and he soon found himself listening to the words of his new friend. He appeared to be an earnest and quiet boy, and at once began to explain the life and character of the school.

“It’s my last year,” said Edward Butler, or “Ned,” as he explained he was commonly known. “I’ve been here two years and they’ve been the happiest years of my life. Of course a fellow in a school of a hundred and fifty boys meets all kinds, but it isn’t long before he finds his own set. I’ve found one thing in my life here though, and as you are a new fellow, and I guess I’m a little older, I’ll tell it to you.”

“What is it?”

“Why, that half the fight’s won when the fellows find out what sort of a chap you are. And it all comes from two little words too.”

“What are they?”

“‘Yes’ and ‘no.’ If a new boy can say either or both of those words as if he meant them right at the start, he saves himself a heap of trouble. The fast fellows leave him alone if they find they can’t work him. I’ve seen more fellows go down just because they couldn’t use those words than from any other one cause. But I don’t think you’ll have much trouble. You look as if you knew what those words meant.”

Ward was silent for a moment. The words of his new friend had touched a sore spot in his soul. Already

he had found himself dissatisfied with his place in the school even before the life had fairly begun. His rooms, his outfit, and his lack of something he could not just define, but which had been very apparent in Speckle, had made him feel that he was not being justly treated; but the calm, earnest words of Ned Butler had come with a helpful impulse and the better part of his nature asserted itself again. He could see too that Henry, who had taken but a little part in the conversation, was strongly drawn to their companion.

"Yes, they make you work here," said Ned in reply to a question of Ward's. "I thought I knew something when I first came up here, but I was very soon set right. Your room in West Hall, do you? Well, it'll be a little harder for you there than in some other places. Mr. Blake is too easy with the boys."

"What, that great tall fellow? He looks as if he could swallow a fellow and not half try."

"That doesn't make any difference," replied Ned laughing. "I had to move out, and now I room in East Hall. Come over and see me sometime."

The conversation soon turned upon the various aspects of the school life, and the prospects of the nine were largely dwelt upon.

"Yes, I play first base," said Ned, "and I hope you'll show up in form too. We need new material. The Burrs have whipped us for two years now."

"The Burrs? Who are they?" inquired Ward, recalling the fact that Jack Hobart also had used the word.

"Oh, that's the name of the school over at Green-

ville, the Burr Seminary. It's a good school, and they have a great nine, though some of our fellows call them muckers. I don't believe in that myself, for when they've beaten us for two years as they have, I'd rather say they were somebody. It doesn't make it quite so bad for us, you see. We've a great player in our captain, Tim Pickard. He's a big fellow, and the hardest hitter we've ever had. At least that's what they say."

"Where does he room?"

"Over in East Hall. He's a good deal of a bully, and not much of a fellow in some ways. At least that's what I think," said Ned, lowering his voice. "He's tough. He's got lots of money and there's always a crowd hanging around him. He's a good player, though."

Ward wondered whether the boy who had called after him a little while before was not the very one to whom Ned was referring, but the signal to rise was then given and the boys filed out of the room, laughing and chatting as they departed to their rooms.

Ward and Henry soon climbed the stairs in West Hall to "seventeen" again, and began to arrange the various articles they took from their trunks in the room. They had brought a cheap ingrain carpet from home, and it was some time before this was laid satisfactorily. Then they arranged the books and few pictures they had brought, and Ward tacked a calendar on the wall over the head of his bed. Henry was not looking at him and Ward quickly and carefully counted the days which must elapse before the Christmas vacation. Ninety-eight days! He drew a long breath, for

it seemed to him like a long time before he would see home again.

And the feeling of discontent was not all gone from his heart either. How bare the rooms looked after all they had done! What would Speckle think, if he should come over there? and that Tim Pickard, the captain of the nine, who had so much money? "H-a-a-y-seed!" Doubtless he was the fellow who had called after them, and Ward felt his cheeks growing warm again as he thought of the insult.

"There, I think we're pretty well fixed up," said Henry, as Ward came out of his bedroom. As Ward made no reply, Henry continued, "I think we'd better go over to the doctor's now. It's after eight o'clock, and you know I have a letter for him from father."

"All right," replied Ward, and the boys, leaving word with Mr. Blake, were soon before the house of Dr. Gray, the famous head of Weston Academy.

In a few moments the boys were admitted into his study and were standing before the principal, who rose to receive them as they entered. He was a small man with a long gray beard, and keen little eyes that peered out in a kindly manner through his gold-rimmed spectacles. But there was an air of decision about him, and his face showed that he could be stern if the occasion demanded it.

"Then you are Ward Hill and Henry Boyd! It doesn't seem possible. Why, I was in school and college with your fathers, and here are his boys coming up to me now. Well, I am heartily glad to see you, boys. Be seated."

The boys were slightly embarrassed in the presence of this man of whom they had heard so much in their homes, and whose name had always been spoken almost with reverence, but Henry managed to draw from his pocket his father's letter and said: "Doctor, father sent this letter which he wanted me to give to you."

The doctor took the letter, and as he opened it and saw that the kind-hearted but innocent old clergyman had written some ten or twelve pages, in which he set forth all the promising traits of character of each of the boys, he smiled, and laying the missive upon the desk before him, swung around in his chair once more and said: "I'll attend to that a little later. Just now I have too many new boys waiting to see me. I'm glad to welcome you here, and shall do all in my power for you, both on your own account and on that of your fathers. You had best report to Mr. Blake now," Ward thought his face clouded a little as he mentioned the teacher's name, "and he will explain the details of the school life to you. To-morrow morning, at quarter before nine, we shall have prayers in the chapel. That's in Science Hall, you know; and then you'll be told the rest. Good-night, boys."

"Good-night, doctor," replied the boys as they left his presence to return to their room in West Hall.

CHAPTER III

A VISITOR

THAT night the boys slept as only tired boys can. The long journey, the excitement following the entrance into new scenes, and the labor of arranging their few possessions in their new quarters, all had combined to make them thoroughly weary and it was late when they awoke on the following morning.

The boys were nearly all gone from the dining room when they entered, and there was a mild reproof from the matron for their tardiness. They ate their breakfast hastily, and the bell which summoned the students to prayers was already ringing when they started back to their room.

Quickly taking their books they ran down the stairs and out along the path which led to Science Hall. The bell was giving short sharp sounds now, as if it was impatient at the delay.

“We’re not the only ones late,” said Ward as he saw that boys were coming from almost every direction. “Just look over by East Hall, will you?” he said, as they drew near to the chapel.

A group of five boys was rushing toward them, some putting on their coats as they ran, and Speckle, who was in advance, making a desperate effort to fasten his collar.

“String out there, you fellows!” called the leader.
“String out, will you? String o-u-t!”

“What does he mean?” said Ward, turning for a moment and looking at Henry.

“It’s more than I can tell. We won’t wait to find out though,” and both entered the open door by which Mr. Blake was standing.

“You’re late, boys,” he said as they entered. “Take your seats over here this morning.”

Ward and Henry followed his directions and as they took their seats in the old-fashioned pew, glanced curiously about them. Speckle and his friends, among whom Ward recognized the big fellow who had hailed them as “hay-seeds” on the preceding evening, had plainly been having some words with Mr. Blake; but at last had pushed by him just as Dr. Gray arose on the platform. The room was almost filled with boys. Their bright, eager faces, the animation of the scene, the nods of recognition that were to be seen as the boys came together for the first morning of the new school year, were all inspiring, and Ward soon felt that all his discontent was a thing of yesterday.

On the platform, arranged in a semicircle about the principal, were the other teachers of the school, seven in number. Two or three of these were quite young, and their faces, almost boyish, reflected in a measure the picture before them. Some of them, however, were men well advanced in years, but sympathy with the young life about them was plainly manifest in the kindly looks they gave to all. An organ and a choir of ten students were on the right of the platform.

A hush came over the room as the doctor rose and gave out the number of a hymn. The singing which followed was inspiring and Ward felt that there was much to be enjoyed in the life upon which he was entering. A Scripture selection was then read ; the doctor offered a brief prayer, and then began to speak to the assembly.

A few cordial words of greeting were given, a statement was made of the rules of the school, one of which required that the boys should not leave their rooms during study hours. These hours were to be announced by the ringing of the chapel bell. An introduction of the new teachers followed, and then the principal turned to say a few words to the "new boys."

The curious glances which were cast toward the side of the room where he was, led Ward to believe that all the new-comers were seated together, and he too looked carefully at his companions ; but in a moment his thoughts were withdrawn to the doctor and he was listening attentively to what he was saying :

"This new life into which you are now entering, young gentlemen, is in the main to be one, the character of which each of you will have to determine for himself. We shall not impose many rules upon you, but we shall expect you to conform to the very best life of the school. This is a place for the making of men, and to be a man is the highest attainment of life. The laws of politeness are really the outgrowth of a desire to be kind. You are to think not only of yourselves but of others also. It is safer to follow such rules than it is to be governed by your own desires alone.

“We shall hope that you are all done with ‘cutting up.’ That belongs to the period of childhood, and we trust you will leave all childish things behind you. We want you to stand high in your classes, but higher yet in character. It is a great thing to be high-toned, to have a sense of what is manly and true. There is sometimes a tendency, when boys and young men are thrown together, to forget the best things and think and talk of those which are unworthy and low. What I want of you is just this: when you make a purchase at any of the village stores you are sure to be careful to get your full money’s worth. I want you to do the same thing in your school life. Some of you come from homes of wealth and the question of expense is not a pressing one; but more of you are permitted to study in this school only by sacrifice on the part of your parents. I want each of you to be sure that he is getting the very best out of this investment which your parents are making.”

The earnest words of the principal were appealing strongly to Ward. He was thinking of what it meant in his own home, the sacrifices and love which made it possible for him to be enrolled among the Weston boys. “I’ll do my level best,” he thought, “and neither my father nor the doctor shall be disappointed in me.”

Just then he glanced across the room, and his attention was drawn to Speckle and Tim Pickard. The latter was nodding and pretending to be asleep, while Speckle was sitting with open mouth and apparently staring hard at Dr. Gray as he spoke. The boys near them were in a high state of glee at the actions of the

two, and in a moment the good resolution of Ward was dampened and his former feeling of discontent returned.

Was the doctor talking of something for which none of the boys cared? The earnest and respectful attention he received from the most of those before him disproved that; but somehow the good impulse in his own heart was weakened and the remainder of the doctor's address was not closely heeded. He heard the directions given for the new boys to remain until they were assigned to classes, and then the rest of the school filed out and passed to the various class-rooms.

Ward Hill never knew just how the next three or four hours passed. He was called upon for work much of which he could not do, and at last there came the verdict that both he and Henry were to be assigned to the class below the one they had hoped to enter, and into which Henry's father so confidently had asserted that they would be able to go.

"Then you have been studying with the village clergyman, have you?" Ward heard the teacher, Mr. Parker, say. "I have no doubt he is a most worthy man, but the modern demands upon the schools simply make it impossible for a boy to be taught in the methods in vogue a quarter of a century ago, and then think that he can go right on in his school work. Every year we have the same experience, and yours is no new case. Perhaps by steady work you may be able to catch up with the other class, but for the present you must recite with the boys of the third year." He then assigned their lessons, and dismissing them from the room, turned to give his attention to others.

Ward was bitterly disappointed. His pride was hurt, and for the first time in his life he felt angry at the saintly Dr. Boyd, who up to this time had always been regarded by him as not only one of the best of men, but also as one whose teaching ability was not to be questioned. There were angry feelings in his heart and angry words were on his lips, but as he glanced at Henry on their way back to their room, he saw that his eyes were filled with tears. In a moment his anger was gone and he was trying to comfort his friend.

"Never mind, Henry," he said; "it'll all come out right."

"It's right now," responded Henry emphatically. "I know we're ready for the fourth year, but Mr. Parker couldn't find it out in a minute. Ward, I want you to promise me one thing."

"What's that?"

"That you'll pitch into the work and do your level best. I don't care so much for myself, but I do want to prove that my father's right. He can't afford to send me here two years before I go away to college, and I don't want him to either. I know we can do that work."

"So do I," replied Ward, "and will soon show it too."

"You can," said Henry. "You can learn a lesson in about half the time it takes me, if you'll half try, and I want to prove to the whole school that my father's right."

"We'll do it," said Ward cheerfully.

The good resolution of the morning was coming back

now and he fully intended to carry out his promise to Henry. His friend plainly was in such distress that his own sympathy was deeply stirred. But more than a good feeling was required to succeed at Weston, and Ward was yet to learn that lesson, with a few others.

"Hello, Ward! What class you in?" It was Speckle who spoke, and with him was Tim Pickard, the captain of the nine, the boy who had saluted him as "Hay-seed" on the preceding evening.

"We're in the third," replied Ward. "That is, we're there for the present."

"Third? That's fine! That's the best class in the school. I'm in that, and was last year too, but I liked it so well I'm taking it again this year. So's Tim." And Spreckle laughed, as if he enjoyed the joke immensely. "Let me see," he continued; "you'll sit right next to me. We're seated in alphabetical order. Hill, Hobart; they'll come right together. Here, Tim, I want to introduce you to these fellows. This is Ward Hill and Henry Boyd; they're going to try to make the nine."

"Is that so? Glad to meet you," replied his companion, interested at once, and shaking each by the hand. "Come down on the campus to-morrow, will you?"

"Yes," replied Ward, flattered in spite of himself by the notice of this fellow, whom a moment before he had regarded with anger. "What time?"

"Oh, about four; after study hour."

"Say, Ward, the doctor gave us a good one this morning, didn't he?" said Speckle.

“ Yes ; I liked it.”

“ So did I. I always liked that speech. I’ve been here three years and he always gets it off at the opening of every term. I was so astonished this morning to hear him reverse the order of one or two things that I couldn’t shut my mouth.”

“ That’s something you never yet have learned to do anywhere, Speck,” said Tim. “ Now, fellows, be sure and show up on the field to-morrow at four-thirty sharp.” And he turned and walked on.

He was not such a bad fellow after all, thought Ward. His air of easy confidence, the strength he plainly possessed, and above all his invitation to come down to the campus, were fast making him forget the brutal greeting of the preceding evening. Henry, however, had been silent throughout the conversation. Doubtless he was thinking of his father.

All that afternoon Ward and Henry worked faithfully over their books. The first novelty of the life was gone and they were beginning to feel at home in Weston. New acquaintances were being made, new friendships formed, but the ordeal of the class-room on the morrow was in their minds and they were preparing to meet it. They would vindicate the verdict of Henry’s father by their good work.

The evening study hour was not half over when there came a low rap on Ward’s door. He had been working hard, but he quickly arose from his chair and opened the door.

“ Sh ! ” said Speckle, in a low whisper, as he entered and carefully closed the door behind him.

“What’s the trouble?” inquired Ward, who was surprised at a visit during the study hour.

“I don’t want any one to hear me. Blake’s out, but I’ll have to be on my guard. You’ll see some fun pretty quick.”

“What fun? I thought all the boys had to stay in their rooms till ten.”

“Ah, the veal’s already working, I see. I told you the hash house would be the death of you, and it will be yet. But the fun’s just this, the ‘Tangs’ are out!”

CHAPTER IV

A CRASH IN WEST HALL

“THE ‘Tangs’? I don’t understand what you mean,” said Ward.

“I forgot you were a new one,” and Speckle laughed. “You’ll hear about them enough before long. The ‘Tangs’ are a secret society. It’s been going for a dozen years I guess. I never got in till last year, and we, or rather they, had a high old time when I was initiated. Perhaps you’ll have a show to get in after a bit.”

“But what do you do? What are they for?” persisted Ward. “I don’t understand.”

“I can’t give away the secrets,” said Speckle. “I’ve told too much already. But the society’s organized for the good of the school. Only the right kind of fellows are taken in, and when you are once inside your fortune’s made. That’s all I can tell you. Only somehow every scrape that happens is almost always charged to the ‘Tangs.’ Why last spring the doctor’s horse wandered out of Weston, and would you believe me, everybody said right away that the ‘Tangs’ of course were to blame.” Speckle laughed as if he could have told more, and Ward, whose curiosity now was thoroughly aroused, immediately asked the question which Speckle had expected.

“ How did the doctor’s horse get away ? ”

“ Oh, he was feeding out in the pasture and somehow, somebody, sometime, someday—of course I can’t say for certain how it happened—tied a bunch of fresh oats on a stick and then tied the stick on the poor old beast’s head in such a way that the oats hung right over the horse’s nose, only about two inches away. Poor old Dobbin liked the smell of the green oats, and he tried to get at them. There they were right close to him, and yet every time he opened his mouth they were just as far off as ever, and he couldn’t get his teeth on them. Nobody ever knew how the gate of the pasture happened to be open, but open it was, and Dobbin followed the oats out through the gate and started down the road. When he went past the window of the doctor’s study the doctor started after him without waiting to put on a hat or change that awful study gown of his. You’ve seen that, haven’t you? Well, it’s a show! It’s a long gown that comes most to his feet; and such a gown too! I’d just about as soon wear a nightshirt.” And Speckle laughed heartily at the recollection.

“ What became of the horse ? ” inquired Ward.

“ Oh, old Dobbin’s as gentle as a lamb, you know. He’s one of those ‘ safe ’ horses. He doesn’t ever get much of a gait on him, just hops up and down like a see-saw, when he travels, and doesn’t seem to go ahead at all. It’s a sight to make the saints weep to see the old fellow in his chaise driving Dobbin. But this time Dobbin didn’t propose to be caught. He was after that bunch of oats, and he’d made up his mind he’d have it if he had to go clear to Dorrfield

to get it. He saw the doctor and actually kicked up his heels. Yes sir, his heels were seen off the ground, though no one who didn't see it for himself would ever believe it. On went the doctor, and on went old Dobbin, and the last seen of them on that trip was as they disappeared over the hill beyond East Hall. All of the fellows who were in it had their heads out of the windows and they were yelling their encouragement. 'Twas a great race! 'Go it, Dobbin!' 'Go it, doctor!' They were the calls for two weeks which the fellows used."

"Did he catch the horse?" inquired Ward.

"I guess so," said Speckle with a laugh. "The doctor doesn't give up when he starts on a thing, and at any rate they came back, though no one ever knew just when or how."

"And you call such tricks as that fun, do you?" said Henry, who had taken no part in the conversation, and had vainly been trying to study. "Do you want to know what I think of it? I think it was a mean, contemptible act, and no one but a sneak would be guilty of such a thing."

Both boys looked at Henry in astonishment. He had been such a quiet fellow that not even Ward was prepared for the outbreak, and Jack, at first silent from surprise, looked at him with an ill-concealed sneer upon his face. Before either of them replied, however, Henry rose from his chair, and bringing his fist down upon the table said: "Yes sir! That's just what it is, a mean, scoundrelly trick! When a man works here as Dr. Gray does, and just for the good of the fellows

who come up here, for a few sneaking chaps to go and do all they can to break him up—I don't want to know any more about them ! Some of these fellows here are working their way through school, and some of them are here only because their fathers and mothers are slaving and doing without things they need themselves just to give the boys a chance to get a fair start in life ; and then for a few low-lived fellows, such as I know these 'Tangs' must be, to go in and do all they can to break up the school and bother the teachers ! Why there's only one word in the whole English language that'll fit them."

"And what's that?" said Jack sneeringly.

"They're thieves. That's what they are. They're just stealing time and work from the teachers that belong to the school. I came up here to work, and I've got to work for it if I get through, and I don't intend, if I can help it, to let any fellow steal from me either." And Henry seated himself again by the table and re-opened his books.

There were mingled feelings in Ward's heart. He had been impressed by the notice and evident favor Speckle had given him. In his own little home village, Ward had always been a leader, and had never thought of himself in any other light. It had often been in his mind, as he thought of the coming days at Weston, that he would be a leader there also, and many were the projects he had dreamed of in which he would be engaged. But for the first time in his life, with his coming to Weston, he had realized that his position was likely to be disputed.

Somehow, although he could not explain it even to himself, he had been greatly impressed by the easy self-assurance of Jack Hobart and the boys of East Hall. They were better dressed than he, and it was plainly to be seen that they were looked up to by many in the school, and some of the teachers themselves in a certain way seemed to hold them in a little different light from that in which other boys were regarded. It was Ward's first experience with the light conscience, the easy bearing, the freedom from responsibility, the condescension which the possession of money and the training (or lack of training) in certain homes, brings to boys and men of a certain class.

He was too young and too new in the school life to appreciate fully all these things at the time, and yet already he was beginning to feel flattered by the attention of Jack Hobart and his friends ; and even the insult of Tim Pickard had been lost sight of in the easy familiarity he had displayed at their second meeting.

And yet Ward Hill was not a weak boy. He had always despised a lie, was as tender-hearted as he was truthful, and all his impulses had been of the generous and better sort. But he was now facing an entirely new and different class of influences from those with which he had always been surrounded, and in which he had been trained ; and only experience would show how he would meet them. His first feeling now was that of anger. Why should Henry want to mortify him in the very beginning of their school course by such words? Doubtless what he said was in a measure true, but he

was altogether too strong in his words over such a harmless prank as Speckle had just described.

Jack Hobart was the first to break the awkward silence which had followed Henry's outbreak, and quickly rising from his chair, he said: "Pardon me. I fear I too am stealing some of your valuable time. 'Crane' (Mr. Crane was the teacher in charge of East Hall) told me I could run over here for a bit and see Ward and explain a little about the lesson to him. Blake's out, so I didn't stop to inquire whether it would be agreeable to you or not. I'm sure I don't want to stay where my company's not wanted."

"Don't go, Speckle," said Ward. "Henry doesn't mean it. Sit down again."

"No, I must go," insisted Jack moving toward the door. "I'll report the case of your chum to the 'Tangs.' He'll need a little attention from them I think," he said, in so low a voice that only Ward could hear him.

"Why, the lamps are out in all the halls!" said Ward in surprise, as he and Jack stepped outside the door. "I wonder how that happened. I guess Professor Mike has forgotten to light them. I'll just start them up myself."

"No, you won't," said Speckle. "You'll soon know why they're out."

Just as he spoke there came a crash that sounded through the building as if the very walls were falling. A fall followed the crash, and Ward thought he heard something that sounded very like a groan. Then for a moment there was silence and the darkness was apparently deeper than before.

“What’s that? What is it?” said Ward quickly; but Jack had already disappeared, and he could hear him as he rushed down the stairway three steps at a time.

Quickly the doors in each hall were thrown open, and the boys, among whom was Ward, rushed down the stairs to the first hall, from which the sound had seemed to come. When he arrived, some one had lighted the great hall lamp, and the crowd of eager boys could be seen huddled together. And there on the floor lay the long form of Mr. Blake.

“Help him up, fellows!” It was Tim Pickard who spoke, and Ward wondered how he happened to be there. “I was just coming from the doctor’s,” said Tim as he took the teacher by the hand, “and hearing the racket I came in to see what it meant. Are you hurt, Mr. Blake?”

“No, I think not much,” replied the teacher in a dazed way as he regained his upright position and rubbed his hand over his face on which a great bruise could be seen, and from which a small stream of blood was trickling. “I had been out for a few minutes and when I came back I fell over this,” and he pointed to the floor.

Ward followed his look and saw the cause of all the trouble. Some one had stretched a wire across the hall at a distance of a foot from the floor. In front of it, and at about the height of a man’s shoulder from the floor, a door, which had been taken from its place, was so arranged in the air that when any one entered the hall in the darkness and tripped over the wire, as he

fell forward, his hands and head would strike against the door and it would fall upon him as he fell.

“It’s too bad, Mr. Blake,” said Jack. “Can’t we do something to help you?”

“No, nothing,” replied the teacher. “I want you all to go to your rooms now.”

Ward had been impressed by the different words of the boys. Some had been silent and showed their sympathy by their actions. Tim Pickard and Speckle had been the most profuse of all in their expressions of desire to aid ; but somehow in Ward’s heart there was a feeling that they both knew more of the occurrence than they cared to show. He recalled Speckle’s words about the “Tangs” being out, and was more and more convinced that they knew who had been guilty. A quick glance from Speckle as he turned to leave confirmed the impression, but the boys were soon gone and the West Hall boys were back in their rooms.

“Some more of the ‘Tangs’ work, I suppose,” said Henry, as he and Ward seated themselves at their study table again. “A fine trick that, and a brainy one too. Mr. Blake is likely to carry the marks of it as long as he lives.”

Ward made no reply, but pretended to be busy in his work ; his thoughts, however, were not of the Cicero before him. At times he felt his blood boil when the picture of the fallen teacher rose before him. And yet what a ridiculous sight he presented ! His long body never had appeared so ungainly as when he lay upon the floor. And some of the boys had laughed too when they had found that he was not seriously injured.

“Why didn’t he take hold of those fellows?” said Ward aloud. “He could shake every one of them as a dog does a rat, the great giant that he is.”

“Perhaps he didn’t know who the guilty ones were,” replied Henry, looking up for a moment from his book.

“I’m going down to see how he is,” said Ward. “He may need some help.”

He went down the stairs and stopped before the door of Mr. Blake’s room. He was about to rap when he was startled by the sounds which came from within the room. Some one was sobbing, and Ward, after listening for a moment, turned and walked slowly back up the stairs.

CHAPTER V

IN THE LATIN ROOM

WARD said nothing of the sounds he had heard from Mr. Blake's room when he returned to his own room. Henry was working busily and did not even glance up when his chum entered, and Ward soon seated himself again and tried to resume his studying. But somehow he could not bring his thoughts to bear upon the work before him.

The plight of Mr. Blake, his patient manner, and above all the sound of the sobs, kept coming back to him. The teacher had been altogether too patient, he thought. If he had shown some signs of anger, or of indignation at least, it would have been better. Doubtless the following day would see some further developments and the scrape would be investigated, and the leaders in it then receive some well-merited punishment. What would it be? Without doubt some of the boys would be suspended or expelled, and Ward's cheeks flushed as he thought of the disgrace. What would his father and mother think if he should be the one to be sent home? He was glad that he had had nothing to do with the disgraceful affair. And he resolutely tried to think of the lesson before him.

It was a familiar passage he was trying to translate and he had read it with Henry and Dr. Boyd nearly

a year before. Henry was working over it as if the words were all new to him ; but when the study hour was over, Ward had done but little work, and he was trusting to his memory of the work he had previously done.

On his way to the chapel next morning, he again fell in with Jack Hobart and Tim Pickard, who hailed him and laughingly referred to the experience of the preceding evening.

“I’m half afraid we’ll catch it this morning,” said Jack. “I’m going to be very devout and listen to every word the doctor has to say. I’ve got to do something to save my reputation. It was a mighty unlucky thing that Tim and I both happened to be over in West Hall when the thing occurred.”

“Oh, you’ll have no trouble, Speck,” said Tim with a laugh. “Everybody knows you’re all straight. I think you’re a special pet of the doctor’s.”

“I don’t think he looks upon me as a black sheep,” replied Jack, sober for the moment.

“No, not all black, only just speckled.” And Tim laughed.

“Well, I shall be glad when chapel’s over this morning,” replied Jack. “Say, Ward, why didn’t you ‘string out’ yesterday morning when I called to you?”

“I didn’t know what you meant,” replied Ward.

“Didn’t know what I meant? My, I should think even that prig you room with would know that. You know the bell gives short, sharp strokes just at the end, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, when you see a lot of fellows come rushing across the campus, somewhat in a state of being half dressed, you’ll know they’re in danger of being marked late. Now, when they yell ‘string out,’ you want to go slower, and by dragging a bit you’ll give the other fellows a chance to crowd in before the door is shut and it is forever too late. Don’t forget that, my son, next time.”

“I wish we had Blake over in East Hall,” said Tim. “We’d have a lively dance to lead him. Crane’s there, and you can’t fool him much.”

“Nor fool with him much either,” said Jack. “I know, for I’ve been there myself. He has the Latin, you know, Ward, and you’ll have a chance to try him to-day. He’s a little fellow, no such strapping giant as Blake is, but he knows how to handle the fellows. Now, boys, step up and take your medicine. Don’t whine nor cry when the doctor takes out the spoon. I wish it was night, I do.”

The boys entered the chapel, and Ward and Jack, as they belonged to the same class and in the chapel as in the recitation rooms the boys were arranged alphabetically, found they were to be seated together. Ward also found that he was sharing somewhat in the anxiety of his companion concerning a possible “lecture” from the doctor, although he had had no share in the escape of the night before. But the exercises were conducted by Mr. Crane, and the principal was not present.

“So far so good,” said Jack, as he and Ward walked through the hall which led to the Latin room, and

where the first recitation, in which the new boy was to share, was to be conducted. "But we're not out of the woods yet. I hope you know the lesson, Ward. As I sit next to you, if Crane calls on me, I'll have to call on you."

Ward laughed, but made no reply, as they already were in the recitation room. Mr. Crane was there, standing by the door, and quietly directing each boy to a seat as he entered.

There were about forty boys in the class, and as Ward glanced about the room, his heart beating a little more rapidly now as he realized that the actual work of the school life had begun, he recognized some, but the most of them were strangers to him. Jack had already taken his seat and was poring over his open Cicero.

A hush came over the room as Mr. Crane turned and quietly took his place behind the desk. Ward recalled what Jack had said, that there would be no fooling in his room, and as he noted the self-possessed manner, the quiet and yet confident bearing, and above all the keen, penetrating glance which the teacher cast about the room, he could not help contrasting his manners with the self-conscious but not self-confident manner of Mr. Blake. Ward decided at once that he should like Mr. Crane.

"Boyd, you may read the Latin," said Mr. Crane, speaking in a low tone, as if there was no one else in the room.

Then Henry was to be the first one called upon to recite. Ward was trembling for his friend and, knowing how anxious he was, hoped he would do well.

“No, not that,” said the teacher, as Henry began to translate in a trembling tone. “Read the Latin, if you please.”

Henry looked up quickly for a moment and then began to read. In a moment there came a look of astonishment on the faces of many of the boys, and then there was a suppressed laughter which soon increased. One or two boys laughed outright, and there was even the trace of a smile about the corners of Mr. Crane’s mouth.

“That will do, Boyd,” he said quietly, and with a glance about the room which quickly suppressed all the tendency to disturb the recitation. “I think that is what you may call making Greek out of your Latin. Hobart, you may read.”

Henry took his seat in great confusion. His face was flushed and there was a look of pain clearly to be seen. What was the trouble? Ward had not seen anything to laugh at in the reading of his friend; but his attention was arrested in a moment as he listened to Jack while he glibly rolled the Latin words from his tongue as if he were reading English.

“That will do, Hobart. That was very well done. Now G. Smith, you may translate.” G. Smith, so called to distinguish him from E. Smith, his younger brother and classmate, had a room next to Ward’s in West Hall, and already the brothers in the school vernacular were distinguished as Big Smith and Little Smith.

It was reported that they were preparing to enter the ministry, and Ward only partially heard the trans-

lation Big Smith was giving. He seemed to be doing fairly well, but Ward was thinking of the reading which Jack Hobart had been giving. It sounded to him like another language. He had never heard the words pronounced in such an outlandish manner before. His thoughts were interrupted suddenly by the voice of the teacher as he said, "Hill, you may read some more of the Latin."

Ward quickly rose, although he was in considerable confusion. He was not minded to furnish more amusement for the class, and he waited a moment before he began. As the teacher raised his eyes questioningly at the delay, Ward managed to say, "Mr. Crane, I can't read the Latin as you do here."

"And in what way do you read it?"

"I don't know what you call it, but it isn't like yours."

"And where have you been studying?"

"At home."

"And where is your home?"

"In Rockford. I've been studying with Dr. Boyd, my pastor."

"Ah. Doubtless you've been using some other pronunciation. Very well, you may translate then, if you please. You will soon become accustomed to our method."

Ward somehow managed to stumble through his work; but the fact that Mr. Crane called upon another boy to translate the same passage as soon as he had taken his seat, showed him that his work had not been satisfactory. He was mortified and glanced

quickly toward Henry. His friend's face showed clearly that he too was suffering, but somehow Ward felt that Henry was thinking of his father, and was feeling for him in the poor showing his boys were making in their first work in the class-room.

The hour was at last over, and as the boys passed out to go to the Greek room where Dr. Gray was the teacher, Ward saw Henry quickly step up to the desk of Mr. Crane and begin to speak eagerly to him.

"Bootlick!" said Jack sneeringly in a low voice to Ward as he pointed to his friend. "He'll soon get cured of that. As soon as this scrape with Blake is over, the 'Tangs' will have to take your prig of a chum in hand."

"He's no bootlick," said Ward indignantly, "though I don't know what a bootlick is. What is it?"

"It's a fellow that tries to curry favor with the teachers. Why doesn't he stand up like a man, and not go crawling on his hands and knees the very first day."

"He isn't crawling," said Ward. "He's trying to explain his failure to Mr. Crane."

"It's all the same," replied Jack. "He'll be fixed, you mark my words. If there's one thing the fellows here won't stand, it's a bootlick."

The recitation in the Greek room passed off quietly, and Dr. Gray did not call upon any of the new boys to recite. Nor did he make any reference to the disturbance of the preceding evening in West Hall.

The school day at Weston was divided into three

recitation periods. Two of these were in the morning immediately following the services in the chapel, and the third was in the afternoon in the hour immediately preceding the supper. From eleven until twelve o'clock there was an hour which the boys had free, and in the afternoon there was the long study time when the students were required to be in their rooms, as they were also in the evening. On Wednesdays and Saturdays there was a half-holiday and the boys were given their full liberty, the only condition being that they were not permitted to leave Weston without permission from the teachers.

"You'll be sure to show up on the ball field this afternoon, won't you?" said Ned during the dinner time. "We're going to see what the prospects of the nine are."

"I thought we had to study all the afternoon," replied Ward.

"No. This is Wednesday, and we'll have a half-day off."

"All right then, and I'll bring Henry too. He'll show you how to play ball."

"Glad to have him come. We want all we can get."

When Ward told his room-mate of the invitation, Henry refused at first to go. "I can't do it, Ward. I've just got to study, and that's all there is about it. I can't bear to think of my father being put to shame as he was this morning in the Latin room. Maybe I'll be down a little later."

"I hope you will, Henry. I just want these fel-

lows to see you play ball once. Hold on, I'll take a hand at the lessons too before we go. I don't want to add anything to your trouble, though I don't think it's as great as you do. It'll all come out right pretty soon."

As the boys entered the hall, Mike the janitor met them. "Well, young gentlemen, it's a wurd I'd be after havin' wid yez."

"Have it then, Mike," said Ward laughingly.

"Indade and I will that. I'm nixt to the principal, but it's his wurd I'll be givin' yez now. He wants the both of yez to come right over to his office."

"What for?" inquired Henry.

"I niver betray the secrets o' the faculty. The professor of dust and ashes knows better nor that; but it's my opinion ye'd better be goin'."

The boys turned and at once started for the office of Dr. Gray. There were confused thoughts in Ward's mind and he was thinking of last night's trouble, of the failure in the Latin class, and of many other things that might have made them trouble. He would soon know, he thought, as they rang the study bell.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONVERSATION WITH THE DOCTOR

“**I** SENT for you, boys,” said Dr. Gray, when they were seated in his study, “because I was compelled to be somewhat hurried when you first came to Weston, and I did not wish my welcome to the sons of my old friends to be half-hearted.”

Ward felt relieved at once. Somehow he had been half afraid that the poor work in the class-rooms had been the cause of the summons, or that the disturbance in West Hall might have had something to do with it, although he had had nothing to do with that. Ward was satisfied that he knew who the leaders in it had been, and the very knowledge gave him a sense of guilt.

The doctor’s face, however, was not in the least stern, and with a feeling of relief Ward was listening to what he was saying. “I have no doubt you have already found,” resumed the doctor, “that the life here is very different from that to which you have been accustomed, and I always tremble a little for the new boys when they first come.”

“That’s just what Ned Butler said,” interposed Ward quickly, and then he flushed slightly as he thought of his own boldness in interrupting the principal.

“Then you already know Edward Butler, do you?”

said Dr. Gray kindly, smiling as he saw Ward's confusion. "I'm glad of it; he's one of the truest boys in the school, a noble fellow, and I am expecting great things of him when he leaves us. Not that he isn't doing remarkably well here," he hastily added; "but he's a young man of great promise. What other students have you met?"

"Oh, lots of them," said Ward. "There's Jack Hobart and Tim Pickard, and——"

"You have met them too, have you?" Ward thought the doctor's face clouded a little as he spoke. "Well, all I want to say to you is, don't make friends too fast or too easily. Keep a little reserve. Be friendly with all, but don't be in a hurry to make close acquaintances. A school is a little world and every boy is sure to find his own level after a little. You'll find one thing though, and that is, that the boys who are really respected and truly popular are not those who seek for popularity at all. Now I want to say a word about your studies. Much of the work is new to you and doubtless you both are somewhat disappointed in being classed a year lower than you had hoped. Your fathers will be disappointed also, but I have written them explaining it all. It is no fault of yours or of theirs either."

Henry's face flushed a little, and an expression of pain came over it which the doctor quickly noticed. Indeed, Ward had the feeling that he could read their very thoughts, and he was somewhat uncomfortable in consequence.

"Now, the teachers are here to help you, boys; that's

just what they are here for, and nothing else. So I want to advise you to use them. Don't be afraid to ask them to explain matters that are not clear to you, and be sure and don't pass over anything without understanding it as you go."

"But, doctor, the fellows call that 'bootlicking'," said Ward quickly, "and they're awfully down on that."

"Never mind what they call it," said the doctor a little more sternly. "I know of what I am speaking. I am not advising you to go against the sentiment of the school; I always respect that just so far as it is right. Yes, just so far as it is right," he added, as if to give greater emphasis to his words, and looking keenly at Ward as he spoke. "But when you say the fellows are opposed to it, I think I know what 'fellows' you mean. You have not heard Edward Butler speak in that manner, have you?"

"No," said Ward slowly. He was thinking of who it was that had informed him of the feeling of the school toward "bootlicks," and the thought, in the light of the doctor's words, did not bring him much comfort either.

"I am not talking about trying to curry favor with the teachers," resumed the principal, "for that is another matter entirely. All I mean is that you are to remember that this school is here to help you to make men of yourselves. You often hear the expression, 'He had the making of a man in him.' It is a sad one to me, for it always implies that he did not make the man after all. Your life here will be some-

thing like the course of a sailboat. The school can furnish the wind, but the tiller is in your own hands. We can't do for you what you only can do for yourselves. And one of the best things you can do is to keep in mind always that you are to receive help from the teachers. You will know best when that help is needed."

"Then I'll go over to Mr. Crane this afternoon and get him to show me something about how you read Latin here. It's all new to me," said Henry.

"That is just it," said the doctor; "and Mr. Crane will be more than glad to show you. He is a most excellent teacher, and you will both respect and like him the more you come to know him. But I wouldn't go this afternoon if I were you."

"Why not?" inquired Henry in surprise.

"Because I would go down on the ball field and become better acquainted with the boys. Half, and I don't know but more than half, of the best lessons you are to learn in Weston will come not from the teachers, but from the boys. And as this is the Wednesday afternoon holiday, you would better use it as such. You can see Mr. Crane after supper to-night, and study this evening. I am keeping you too long already, but before you go there is one more matter I must mention."

The doctor was silent for a moment and his face showed a troubled expression. Again Ward thought of possible references to poor work in the class-room, or of the disturbance in West Hall. As he glanced up he saw that the doctor was looking at him and when he began to speak his face blushed crimson.

“There has just come to me the report of a disgraceful act in West Hall last night. I refer to the trick that was played upon Mr. Blake. Of course I know that neither of you had anything to do with it, but I want to speak of it before you go. At Mr. Blake’s earnest request I have decided to let the matter pass for the present; for the present,” he added. “We know who the guilty ones are, but action will be suspended for a time, as he so earnestly requests it. Now, I don’t mind saying to you, boys, that Mr. Blake is himself in a very precarious position in the school. He is a fine scholar and a most excellent teacher, but he is altogether too easy with the boys. For those who wish to draw from him he is a valuable man; but unfortunately there are always a good many boys in a school like this for whom we have to create an appetite as well as satisfy it. They are always the peril of school life. Now, if Mr. Blake fails, for all that he is such a good scholar and so excellent a teacher, he will have to go. And much will depend upon the boys, and no small share will fall to you, for in a way I think you will help to form the school spirit.”

He paused and looked keenly at the boys, but neither spoke, and he soon resumed: “There is something besides the school to be considered too, in Mr. Blake’s case. He is a young man, only out of college two or three years, and his college debts are not all paid. His mother is a widow, and he has a sister who for years has been a helpless invalid. They are almost without a support of any kind, and the privations they endured to enable him to go through college will never be known,

I suppose, outside of the family. The little money they had then is all gone now, and both are entirely dependent upon him. If he loses his place here, it will bring great suffering to more than one."

Ward was listening intently and a new light was breaking in upon him. He recalled the sound of sobbing which he had heard coming from Mr. Blake's room, and now he thought he understood what before had seemed so strange to him. It was Mr. Blake himself who had been weeping, and without doubt he was thinking of his widowed mother and invalid sister in his trouble. Somehow the work of the "Tangs" did not appear in the same light as it had on the preceding evening.

"What do you want us to do, doctor?" said Ward.

"I don't want you to mention this talk for one thing, for I have taken you both into my confidence. Another thing I do want you to do, and that is to throw your influence on the right side. Talk Mr. Blake up and not down. Do all you can to see that his authority is upheld. If he can only work on for a year and do fairly well in his discipline, he promises to become one of the best men we ever had. And I am sure you want everything done which can be done for the good of the school from which you soon will be graduates."

"We'll do everything in our power," said Ward impulsively; "won't we, Henry?"

"Yes," said Henry slowly. He had taken but little part in the conversation, but his silence had arisen from no lack of interest.

“That’s right, boys,” said the doctor cordially, rising from his chair as he spoke. “Now I must keep you no longer from the ball field. Mrs. Gray and I will expect you to dine with us on Monday evening next.”

The boys quickly left the room, and Dr. Gray stood in the doorway for a moment watching them as they eagerly ran toward the ball field, from which the shouts could be heard of the boys already at their game. He soon closed the door and returned to his study, but it was several minutes before he resumed his writing. He sat looking down at the floor and thinking over the interview which had just closed. “As like their fathers as one pea is like another,” he said to himself. “Henry is the same sturdy, earnest fellow that his father was. Ward can easily outstrip him, if he will try, and has far greater capacity for either good or evil. One can see just what kind of a man Henry will be, but as for Ward, I tremble for him when I think of these next two years. He is bound to be a leader, and if he only throws the influence he will soon have on the right side, it will be a good thing for Weston Academy and Ward Hill himself. I pray God the lad may prove true to his best self.” And Dr. Gray resumed the work on his desk before him.

Meanwhile Ward and Henry had gained the ball field, and like all strong, healthy boys of sixteen, were keenly excited by the scene before them.

“We’ve only six of the old nine left,” said Jack Hobart, who quickly sought them out as soon as he came in from the field, “and we’re filling in with subs. We’ve a scrub nine playing against us, for all

we want to-day is to try the new fellows a bit. We'll give you a chance in a minute. Say, Ward, do you see who it is playing first base on the scrubs?"

Ward looked as Jack directed, and to his surprise saw Mr. Blake there. Most of the boys were clad in the uniforms of the school. Mr. Blake's long form and awkward appearance were rendered doubly awkward by his dress. He had refused to lay aside his coat, and as he jumped about after the ball, his coat-tails flying about him, and his long arms waving frantically in the air in his desperate efforts to catch the ball, he certainly presented a ludicrous sight.

Ward had just come from Dr. Gray's study, but his words were already forgotten as he watched the awkward teacher, and he joined heartily in the laughter of Jack.

"Just watch the boys soak him!" said Jack. "It's great fun for them, and he gets every ball sent in as if it was shot out of a cannon."

"It's a shame to treat him so," said Henry indignantly. "What do they do it for?"

"For fun," replied Jack. "Blake can't play ball a little bit, and he ought to know enough to know it too, but he doesn't. Just see that, will you?" and he laughed aloud with nearly all the boys as they saw the tall teacher try to stop a ball which had been thrown with unusual force. It had slipped through his hands and struck his body with a thud that could be heard all over the field, and all the boys were shouting with delight.

"What does he want to do that for?" said Henry,

who was sympathizing with the unfortunate teacher. "What makes him try to play when he can't?"

"Oh, he's doing the popular act, that's all," replied Jack, rolling over on the ground in his delight. "He's trying to curry favor with the fellows, and that won't work. The boys know every time when a teacher tries to get their good-will, and he never gets it then."

Ward thought of the words of Dr. Gray concerning the boys who tried to become popular in the school, and wondered if both the principal and Jack were not correct.

"No, sir," resumed Jack, sitting upright on the ground now; "no teacher ever ought to try to take a hand in athletics unless he's a good one. The fellows will fix him every time, and he's the loser. Hello, we're out!" he exclaimed, as he rose from the ground where he had been seated. "Say, Tim, can't you find a place for these two fellows on the scrubs?"

"I guess so," replied the captain. "Mr. Blake's had enough and Big Smith's quit."

Both Ward and Henry quickly threw aside their coats and were ready to take the positions assigned them.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW PLANS

THE two hours which followed were hours of pure enjoyment to Ward, and his pride in the prowess of his chum was not put to shame. Ward had for a long time been an enthusiastic player, and in his little village home both he and Henry had been considered remarkable. It was a source of deep satisfaction to him to perceive that when the time came to compare themselves with the boys of the academy, they were not one whit behind them, and indeed Henry gave promise of excelling them all. He had entered heartily into the game, and batted and ran the bases as if his very life were depending upon his efforts.

“That’s the longest hit ever seen on these grounds,” shouted Ned Butler, who was the catcher of the nine, as Henry dropped his bat and started for first base.

“Go it, Henry! Go it!” he shouted again as Henry started on and cleared the bases before the ball had been returned to the infield.

But Ward, who had been shouting his words of encouragement also, noticed a look of dislike on Tim Pickard’s face. As the captain and pitcher of the nine he had felt that Henry’s success had in a measure reflected upon his own ability, and the feeling of jealousy was perhaps only the natural result. And yet

what a handsome fellow he was, Ward thought. He was larger than any of the boys in the school, and as he had sent the balls with all his strength and skill over the plate every time Henry had stepped to the plate, and as his left-handed delivery had usually puzzled most of the boys, especially the new-comers, his chagrin at Henry's success was the more marked.

Henry was almost as tall as the pitcher, but not so heavy. He was possessed of remarkable strength however, as Ward well knew, for in their almost daily struggle to put each other on the bed, Ward, who was himself no weakling, had almost invariably found himself measuring his length beneath his chum.

Ned Butler, the catcher, was shorter but possessed of remarkably broad shoulders, and his deep chest showed his powers of endurance. As a swift and straight thrower he was the best in the school with the single exception of Tim Pickard, the pitcher.

As the game went on, the enthusiasm of the spectators and that of the nine increased, for each test of Ward and Henry showed that they were the equals of the best, and when at last they all were ready to quit the grounds, and began to gather up the bats, Ned said to Jack Hobart, who as usual was the center of the noisy group of players: "Well, Speck, we've got two good men for the nine anyhow. I never saw such a hitter on this field as you are, Henry."

"Right you are!" replied Jack enthusiastically, striking Ward upon the back. "You're both of you sure to make the nine. We'll show the Burrs a trick or two this fall."

All of the boys seemed to share in the enthusiasm of the new additions to the nine, except the captain, Tim Pickard. He had not said a word in praise of the new boys, and the dark scowl on his face grew more and more forbidding. As he was the natural leader of a certain class of the boys, his physical strength, the wealth he was supposed to possess, and his place in the class all combining to produce this, it was not long before the first enthusiasm of some of the admirers of Ward and Henry began to cool perceptibly.

"Come up to my room, fellows," said Tim, "at least all the members of the nine. I want to talk over some of the plans I have."

"Of course you want Ward and Henry to come too," interposed Ned quickly. "They're sure to make the nine, and the sooner they come in the better."

"Yes, Tim wants them both to come, I know," spoke up Jack as he noticed a momentary hesitation on the part of his friend. "Tim meant to include them both, I'm sure."

"Yes, I suppose so," said the captain. "Let them come if they want to."

"But I don't want to," said Henry quietly. "I don't know that I shall have time to play on the nine anyway. I've got to work harder than you fellows, and certainly I sha'n't come if I'm not wanted."

Henry looked straight at Tim as he spoke, and Ward knew that although he was speaking quietly he was thoroughly angry. Whenever he saw those white spots on his cheeks, he knew what to expect.

"He'll come, I know he'll come," said Ned Butler

drawing Henry's arm under his own. "You fellows go up to Tim's room, and we'll join you in a few minutes. I want to go around to my room first, and Henry'll go along with me, and then we'll come right up. Come on, Henry," he added as he started from the field.

Henry went with his friend and they walked slowly on behind the other boys who had already started for Tim Pickard's room in East Hall.

"I'm glad you came," said Ned, as he and Henry walked on together. "There were some things I wanted to say to you, and this is the best time, I guess."

Henry made no reply, for his heart was still hot within him. In spite of his quiet manner, he had a great deal of pride in his make-up, and the feeling which Tim Pickard had displayed had stung him to the quick. Besides, he had been more than half in earnest when he had declared that he did not know whether he could play on the nine or not. His studies were first in his mind, and as he thought again of the mortification of his father when he should hear that the boys were classed lower than he had confidently expected, he was determined that nothing should be allowed to interfere with his work. He was thinking of his father as he walked on and his face even then grew soft. Was there ever such a man as he? Tender-hearted as a child, sympathetic and always willing to do anything that lay within his power for another, few boys, he thought, had ever been so fortunate as he in having such a father. And yet, even then Henry, although he was himself unconscious of it, was on the defensive toward him. Before,

he had never doubted his father's ability as a teacher. His father's stories of school experiences and how high he had ranked in college had been familiar to him from his earliest days. And now in a measure the illusion was vanishing. The plain state of the case was that both he and Ward were not well prepared to go on even with the boys in the class to which they had been assigned, and nothing would avail but the hardest kind of work. Poor Henry ! It is always a critical time in a boy's life when first there comes the suggestion that perhaps his father after all is not the great man he had always considered him to be. Nothing but affection already secure can hold a boy at such a crisis and when the natural reaction comes.

"Yes, I wanted to talk with you," resumed Ned who had been silent for a few moments, as he realized that the thoughts of his companion had not been with him. "I want you to go on the nine for several reasons."

"What are they?"

"One is, because you'll be one of our best men and we want to uphold the name of the old school. I know Dr. Gray believes in this sort of thing, and you'll do him a good turn as well as have a good time yourself."

As Henry still made no reply, he continued : "And another reason is for the sake of the boys. I don't like to say it, but Tim doesn't have a very good influence on the fellows. He's such a good player and is so free with his money, that lots of them think he's just the best sort of a chap. But, Henry, he's doing lots of harm. The last time we went over to play the Burrs,

he and two or three fellows slipped away from the crowd and lost the train, or pretended that they did, and when they came back they were drunk as lords. None of the fellows said anything about it, though they knew of it all the time."

Henry in his quiet village home had always been trained to believe that drinking was one of the worst of sins. It was something of which he knew only by report, for drunkenness was not common there, and the words of his friend fell like lead upon his mind. He could not restrain the look of disgust which swept over his face as Ned spoke.

"I don't mean to squeal on him now," resumed Ned, "and I'm almost sorry I told you ; but if you come on the nine you'll help to keep things straight, and just now there's special need of it."

"What did they make such a fellow captain of the nine for?"

"I can't tell just how it came about, but Speck, who rooms with him and is one of the most popular fellows in school, worked it somehow. But there's a good deal of feeling among the fellows and it wouldn't take but a vote or two to throw him out yet, and he knows it. I suspect that is one of the reasons why he isn't very favorable to you. But you'll go in just the same, won't you?"

"Yes, I think so ; that is, if the other fellows want me."

"Of course they want you. But here we are. My room's on the first floor. Come in a minute and then we'll go right over to Tim's and Speck's room. It's in

the other end of East. Sit down and I'll be ready in half a minute," he added as they entered his room.

Henry seated himself and glanced about the room. How beautiful it was and what a contrast to his own in West Hall. For the first time he had a feeling like that of Ward's at the superior opportunities of some of the boys. The floor was covered with a warm rich carpet, and beautiful pictures were hanging from the walls. There were easy-chairs, and what to Henry seemed like everything for one's comfort.

"It's a pretty good sort of a den, isn't it?" said Ned coming out of his bedroom. "I room here alone, for my father wanted me to be alone for the first year, and somehow I've kept on in the same way during the other two years. Sometimes I think I'd like a chum, but then you know a chum might not like me," and he laughed merrily.

"I should think most any one would be glad to come in here with you," said Henry slowly.

"Most too late now, for this is my last year," said Ned; "but I've left the room pretty much as mother fixed it for me when she came up with me when I entered."

"Does she come up often?" asked Henry, noticing a softened expression on Ned's face as he referred to his mother.

"No, she's dead. She died during my first year." And Ned's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, I'm so sorry I spoke of it," said Henry, almost overwhelmed as he saw his friend's sorrow.

"You've no need to be," replied Ned smiling. "I

haven't forgotten her if she is gone. Sometimes when I sit alone here in the evening it almost seems as if she was here too. At any rate I know the thought of her has kept me straight a good many times when I might have got off. But do you know, the fellows whose mothers are alive, it always seemed to me, ought to be straighter still, for they can follow them. My father," he added more cheerfully, "has always insisted upon my boarding at the hash-house. I'm not sorry for it either, for I like it, and he thinks it's better for the fellows to be thrown in together in the way they are there."

"Then they don't always feed you on veal there?"

"Who's been talking with you? Speck? That sounds like him. He has made a great hobby of the veal at the hash-house."

Henry laughed and acknowledged that Jack had been his informant concerning the diet at the dining hall, and arose to follow his friend who was now ready to go over to Tim Pickard's room.

"I hope you'll come over often," said Ned. "Somehow I have the feeling that we shall be pretty good friends before the year is over."

"I shall be glad to." And Henry meant what he said, although he was wondering what Ned would think of his own bare room in West Hall when he should see it.

As they approached Tim's room they could hear the shouts and laughter of the boys assembled there, and Ned said: "Tim's over his ill nature, I guess. It doesn't last very long with him usually."

“Come in ! What are you staying out there for ?” shouted Jack in response to their rap.

Ned and Henry entered and the latter was surprised when he saw that the room was far better furnished even than Ned’s. Ward was there, but Henry saw a troubled expression upon his face, although he was laughing noisily.

“You’ll have to sit on the floor, fellows,” said Tim pleasantly, as they entered ; “all the reserved seats have been taken.”

“Go on with your story, Tim,” shouted one of the boys.

“All right,” responded Tim, and he at once resumed a story which evidently had been interrupted by the entrance of the two boys.

He had scarcely begun again before Henry looked in surprise and disgust at Ned. The story was a filthy one and Tim seemed to be enjoying it. Some of the boys appeared to enjoy it also, but Henry noted a bright red spot on each of Ned’s cheeks, and in a moment his friend rose and started toward the door.

“Hold on, Ned, where are you going ?” called Jack.

“I’m going to leave this room,” said Ned quietly.

“What’s the trouble ?” inquired Tim.

“Nothing, except that I think too much of myself to listen to any such stuff as you are getting off.” And before another word could be spoken Ned had opened the door and started down the hallway.

CHAPTER VIII

NED BUTLER'S TALK

AN awkward silence came over the room as soon as Ned left, and for a moment the boys looked at one another as if they were not quite certain of themselves. There was an angry flush on the face of Tim Pickard, and he looked sneeringly toward the door through which Ned disappeared.

Before any one spoke Henry rose and said : " If this is the kind of a baseball meeting you hold, I don't think you had better count on me." And he too started toward the door, followed by three or four of the other boys.

" Oh, hold on, Henry," said Jack quickly ; " we'll attend strictly to business now. Come on back, it'll be all right now."

But the boys made no reply and quickly left the room. Ward had hesitated a moment and his hesitation proved his weakness. He had forgotten all about the decided " yes " and " no " of which Ned Butler had spoken at their first meeting. To do Ward justice we must say that he had no sympathy with what had occurred, and deep down in his heart he had a feeling of increased respect for Ned. He knew he was right, but the presence of the other boys had served as a check upon his own impulse to follow Henry and he had re-

mained in the room, although he was far from feeling at ease there.

"You've done it now, Tim," said Jack. "You know what Ned Butler is and you might have had the decency to wait at least until he had gone."

"Let 'em go if they want to. We can get along without them," replied Tim angrily.

"Well the nine can't, if you can," said Jack. "We haven't a catcher in the school like Ned, and Henry's the longest hitter ever seen on the grounds. And just when we had a good chance to pay off old scores with the Burrs you must go and upset it all. I say it's a shame!"

But Tim made no reply. His face showed that he was thoroughly angry rather than ashamed. The meeting, however, soon broke up and Ward departed for his room in West Hall.

As Henry did not refer to the trouble when he came, Ward also made no reference to it, and apparently the subject was dropped. Another meeting of the nine was called on the following day after the morning recitations were finished, and as Ned and Henry were there, the trouble seemed to be over.

A letter from the Burrs had already been received and the annual fall game was arranged to take place within three weeks on the grounds of the Burrs. As all this happened before football had become the national autumn game, the baseball fever is readily explained.

And now the days began to pass rapidly. There was the practice of the nine every afternoon, and the

studies and recitations of each day. Ward had meant what he had said to Henry and entered into the work with all his heart. He learned easily and rapidly, and after three days he began to be looked upon as one of the promising scholars of his class.

Henry was more of a plodder, but he too was gaining a fair standing in his class and things were promising now for both our boys. They increased the number of their acquaintances, and the boys in their own hall soon became like familiar friends. In addition to Big Smith and Little Smith, there were two brothers who had the room adjoining Ward's, and they soon came to be known as Big Alden and Little Alden.

But already the boys were beginning to seek their own, and Ward found that he was drawn more and more toward East Hall, and spent many hours in Jack Hobart's room. He was greatly drawn to Jack, for with his impulsive ways and generous heart, he was a general favorite in spite of the fact that he was known to be in almost every scrape, and gave just as little time to his books as he could possibly and yet maintain himself in the class.

On Sunday morning all the school assembled in the little village church where attendance was required, and seats were reserved for the boys. Ward had not felt especially interested in the service, for it seemed to him that the preacher was looking over his head all the time at the older people who sat in the back pews and in the gallery of the church.

In the afternoon there was a Bible class for each of the various classes of the school. Mr. Crane conducted

the one to which Ward and Henry went, and as they were required to attend this class, and as Ward had come to entertain a very strong regard already for Mr. Crane, he was greatly interested in all that he said.

In the evening, the attendance upon public service was not required, but there was to be a school prayer meeting and Ward was somewhat undecided as to whether he would go or not. He knew that Henry would go, and doubtless expect him to go also, but although he said nothing of his feeling, he was beginning to resent the implied oversight of his chum.

"Come up to my room, Speck," he said to Jack after supper, when he met him on the campus.

"Don't care if I do," replied Jack, and the two boys soon made their way to Ward's room. He lighted his lamp and then tipped his chair back against the wall. The room seemed to be more bare than ever before, and he could not keep from thinking of the contrast it must present to Jack.

"Say, Ward," said Jack, who to do him justice had no feeling of elation over his own superior possessions, "if you keep on, we'll make a valedic out of you. You haven't flunked once in class since you've been here."

Ward laughed and although he was pleased at the words of praise, he said: "You can't tell how long it'll last, Speck. I do want to put in my best work, though."

"Right, my son. Only don't make a dig out of yourself. You know the doctor says the ball field is most as important as the Greek room. I'm not afraid

of passing in baseball, but if it wasn't for my pony, I don't know what I'd do in Greek. And as for Latin I don't dare to use one there much, so I suppose I shall have the pleasure of another year with Mr. Crane. Three times and out, you know."

"What's a pony, Speck?"

"A pony? You don't mean to say you don't know what a pony is! Why a pony is, a—well—it's a translation; that's all. Here I've got a slip in my pocket now," and Jack showed him a leaf torn from a translation of the Greek which the class was then reading.

"What do you do with this, Speck?" said Ward slowly.

"Do with it! What do you suppose I do with it? I take it into class and use it to instruct the doctor with. It's a good deal better than the translation I could give him, and besides it saves me a lot of midnight oil. I must be economical whatever else I am. But I've got to give it up with Mr. Crane. He objects. Don't you remember what he said yesterday? 'Hobart, I think I shall have to advise you to use another translation. That isn't quite so good as some others.'"

"That's what made all the fellows laugh so then, yesterday, when Mr. Crane sat you down, was it? I didn't quite understand."

"That's it, my gentle innocent. But Mr. Crane's like a buzz-saw. It won't do to monkey around him very much."

"I like him, though."

"So do I," replied Jack heartily. "All the fel-

lows respect him, and the most of them like him too. They always like a man who brings them squarely up to the line. Now if Blake would only do that too, the fellows would all like him a great deal better. How does he get along with the boys here in the Hall?"

Ward laughed as he said, "Only fairly well. If the great big man would only take hold of some one, he'd stop the rackets." He said no more, as he was thinking of Dr. Gray's words. Certainly the study hours were not very well observed in West Hall, and already Ward knew that a feeling of uneasiness was growing among the boys who roomed there.

"Say, Ward," resumed Jack, "I want to give you a tip. Don't let your chum get too far away from you. I'm afraid he'll have trouble."

"What do you mean?" said Ward.

"Oh, nothing much. I mustn't give away too much. But some of the fellows are getting down on him. You remember what I said about the 'Tangs'—oh, here he is now," he said abruptly, rising from his chair as Henry and Ned Butler entered the room.

Had Henry overheard his words? Ward could not tell, but he was much confused as he arose and offered his chair to Ned. The room contained but three chairs, and when there were four boys in it some one of necessity either must stand or sit on the table.

"Keep your seat, Ward," said Ned. "We're not going to stay."

"We're going around to the meeting. You're coming, aren't you, Ward?" said Henry.

"I don't know," replied Ward slowly. He was a

little angry at Henry for his assumption of authority, and then too, he was wondering what Jack would think.

“Don’t let me keep you, Ward,” said Jack hastily, preparing at once to take his leave.

“No ; come on yourself, Speck,” said Ned. “We need all the help we can get.”

Jack hesitated a moment and then said : “All right. I’ll go to-night ; but ‘don’t let this be a precedent,’ in the language of Blake. I wouldn’t dare to do that.”

The boys laughed and started together for the Latin room, in which the meeting was to be held. The room seemed to be pretty well filled when they entered, and the service already had begun.

There were many curious glances cast at Jack as he entered and took a seat with Ward near the door. “That’s in case of danger, so that I can flee in time,” he whispered to Ward. But Ward made no reply. He was interested in what was going on about him.

Big Smith was taking some part now. His voice had fallen to an unnaturally low pitch, and it did not sound like his own. As he went on Jack whispered : “He’s going to be a minister, and he’s practising for it now. Just hear his tone, will you ? He’ll be a doctor of divinity as sure’s you’re born. He’s most too short-winded though for that, I guess,” he added, as Big Smith soon was seated again.

Another and another took part, and Ward could not keep back the suggestion Jack had put into his mind that some of the boys were using the meeting as a practice place. He forgot all about his own duty and was listening as if he were an outsider.

There came a change, however, when Ned Butler rose and began to talk. "I don't know much about this joy and peace I've heard so much about to-night. If I do right, it's almost always because I have to fight to do it. But I tell you, fellows, I believe there is such a thing as right. I haven't forgotten what I've been taught," and Ward, in surprise, thought he detected a break in his voice. He did not know what Ned had told Henry of his own loss, but many of the boys were aware of his sorrow. Jack was listening intently, and Ward was surprised to see a thoughtful and softened expression upon his face. He turned again to follow Ned's words, for he had quickly resumed. "If there is a right, then it's right to do right, and that's about all I know about it. It doesn't take us boys long to find out a sneak, and we know every time when a fellow is square and fair. Now this school was never in greater need of fellows who will stand by their colors than it is now ; fellows who are clean and above-board, who are not afraid of what the boys will think, but of what they themselves will think of themselves. I've been here three years, and this, as you all know, is to be my last, that is, if I'm lucky enough to finish ; and I want to say right here, that some of the best things I've learned have been from the boys in the class ahead of me, who wouldn't have a hand in anything that was low or vile. Every one of us has to meet it in some form, and it either makes or breaks us. I'm not trying to preach, for I can't ; but I do want to say that every one of us is called upon to stand by what we know is right just now, and stand fast too."

Ned sat down and the meeting, as far as Ward was concerned, was over. Some others took part, some earnestly, and some who Ward thought were practising. He had half suspected that Ned intended a special rebuke for them in the words he had spoken.

When they went out Ward was unusually thoughtful and even Jack had been in a manner impressed.

“That Ned Butler’s the straightest fellow this school ever had in it,” said Jack. “There isn’t a bit of pious whine or cant about him. He never reaches out and pats us poor sinners on the head either. My, but didn’t he show up well alongside that freak, Big Smith!”

“Big Smith’s all right, I guess,” replied Ward.

“Oh, yes, he’s all right enough; only when he talks about religion it makes me feel as if it was something like the measles. You sort o’ ought to have it, and have it once, and be done with it. But Ned Butler, why, he never preaches, but somehow do you know I never see him on the ball field or anywhere, without thinking that he’s got something I haven’t, and I wish I had it too, though I shouldn’t want to lose my mother to get it. Oh, dear! maybe if I’d been his chum I’d have been a better fellow now.”

The boys walked on in silence for a time, and Ward was sharing in the feelings of his companion. He too had been impressed by Ned’s earnest and frank manner, as well as by his words. He thoroughly liked him, and felt a trifle piqued as he thought of the evident preference he had shown already for Henry.

“Hello, Speck, we’ve been looking all over for you.”

It was Tim Pickard who spoke, and in a moment Ward felt that the contrast between him and Ned jarred and irritated him.

“Come on, Speck, the ‘Tangs’——” Ward could hear no more, for Tim had lowered his voice and was whispering eagerly to Jack.

In a moment Jack said: “Good-night, Ward, I’ll see you in the morning.”

Somehow Ward gained the impression that Jack was wanting to stay, but the influence of Tim Pickard had proved too strong and he had gone with him.

“I wonder what the ‘Tangs’ are up to, and on Sunday night too,” thought Ward, as he walked on toward West Hall. Suddenly the thought of the warning Jack had given him of the feelings of the “Tangs” toward Henry came to him. Could it be that they were planning something against him? Startled in spite of himself by the suggestion, and forgetting all about the meeting he had just come from, Ward started and ran rapidly up the walk which led to West Hall.

CHAPTER IX

AN INTERRUPTION

HENRY was not in the room when Ward entered, and with a feeling of relief he turned on the light and soon seated himself by the table. But he was not able to interest himself in the open book which he held in his hand, and soon found himself thinking over the events of the day, foremost among which was the meeting with Tim Pickard a few moments before.

Somehow in Ward's mind there was a feeling of uneasiness whenever he thought of the "Tangs." Doubtless Jack had greatly exaggerated their doings in the many stories he had told him, but if only one half of them were true, the society was a menace to the best life of the school.

It was dangerous to incur their enmity and they never failed to pay off their grudges, so Jack had declared again and again. But Ward had never been able to discover who the boys were who belonged to it, and even Jack had laughingly declared that he was not going to give away the secrets, nor would he say that he himself was a leader in it, although of this latter point Ward never had any doubts.

The society was almost as old as the school itself and the teachers were all bitterly opposed to its existence. Indeed Jack had declared with considerable enthusiasm

that again and again they had tried to suppress it, but the only result had been that it had been "suppressed," but not killed. Openly the society for a time had ceased to be, but secretly, its work had been kept alive, and now it was flourishing again more or less openly.

The "best fellows in the school belonged to it," so Jack had declared ; but the vision of what Jack meant by the "best fellows," rose before Ward's mind. Doubtless he referred to the students who had plenty of money, who did just as little work as it was possible for them to do, and were in the school because they had been sent by their fathers rather than had come because they wished to learn. "They're all East Hall boys," thought Ward a little bitterly, looking around his room which had never seemed so bare to him as it did on that night. The rooms in East Hall did not look much like his.

And yet as he thought of it, he was satisfied that not all the East Hall boys were or could be members of a society which had for its avowed purpose the carrying on of pranks and furnishing the disorderly element of the school life. "Ned Butler would not belong to such a crowd," thought Ward, and there were a good many others who, although they were able to have the pleasant rooms in East Hall, would not be guilty of engaging in any of the pranks which the "Tangs" seemed ever to have in mind.

The thought of Ned Butler carried his mind back to the meeting of the evening and his sturdy words sounded again in his ears. "Do right because it is right to do right." Ward knew how warmly his father and

mother would approve of that, and how glad they would be to have him friendly with such a fellow as Ned. But then, Ned had shown a very decided preference for Henry, and perhaps he himself was not cared for.

He became a little bitter at the suggestion, and that, combined with the thought of his home and the loneliness of the hour, made Ward for the first time since he had come to Weston, a trifle homesick. What a pleasure it would be to look in upon the old home now. Doubtless they all were just about returning from the evening service at this time and had been listening to the words of Dr. Boyd.

Ward smiled as he thought of what those words probably had been, for the good doctor was never known to vary very much from the customary exhortation he had used for many years. But he was a noble man, and had been a true friend to him, and rousing himself from his revery he determined to do all that lay within his power for Henry, for somehow he had the impression that Henry had incurred the anger of the "Tangs" and he was fearful of coming trouble, although he could not just determine what form it was likely to take.

He had just taken his book again when there came a rap on the door. Half hoping that Henry had returned, he called "Come in."

"I thought you had come back," said Big Smith as he entered and took the chair which was offered him. Ward had not felt very strongly drawn to his visitor, but he rejoiced at anything which would drive away his present thoughts, so he cordially welcomed his classmate.

“I was glad to see you at the meeting to-night,” resumed Big Smith. He was speaking solemnly and Ward at first did not know whether to laugh at the condescending air of his visitor, or be angry at his manner.

“Yes, I liked it. But I don’t know what you mean by that. Did you think I was a heathen man or a publican, who never went to such places?”

“Not at all. Only I was rejoiced to see you there. The fellows must make much of such things. I hear there are lots of ungodly boys here in school.”

“Do you think there are any more here than anywhere else?”

“Yes I do. Down in Vernon, where I live, there are no such boys as Tim Pickard or Ned Butler.”

“Ned Butler! You don’t mean to say there is anything the matter with him, do you?”

“Why, yes,” replied Big Smith. “Didn’t you hear him to-night?”

“Yes I did, and what he said struck home to me too.”

“That’s no way to talk,” said Big Smith, solemnly shaking his head. “The idea of any one saying it was hard work to do right. It’s the comfort of my life that I don’t have any such feelings in my heart. I just like to do these things.”

“What things?”

“Why to speak in meeting and talk. I hope I shall have a good influence in the school.”

“You’re going to be a minister, aren’t you?” inquired Ward.

“Yes, sir, I am. My parents prayed for it before I

was born. I've been practising reading hymns every day since I have been here."

"Then that's what you think it is to be a preacher, do you?" replied Ward, laughing in spite of himself at the solemn tone and manner of his visitor.

"That's a good part of it. I don't see the use of wasting all these years in school and college, for my part. I'd just like to begin my work right away. They took up a collection in church for me and George (George was his younger brother and room-mate as well as classmate) and for Pond. He rooms right under me you know."

"Yes, I know, and he's a fine fellow too, Pond is. He's going to be a regular dig. When I asked him to go down to the ball field he said he couldn't. He felt as if he must put in all the work he could as others were paying his expenses here, and he felt that he ought to give them the very best return he could in the work he was doing, and he said he was away behind in his studies. I tell you I look up to him as I do to few of the fellows here. He's square as a die, and next to Ned Butler, there isn't a fellow in school can touch him. Everybody likes him, and he'll lead the class too before he's done, in my opinion."

"Ahem!" replied Big Smith. "Yes, Pond is a good fellow, a very good fellow; but he works as if he thought the work he was doing was the most important thing. Now I don't. I've been working on a sermon since I've been here. I'll go and get it and read it to you——"

"Oh, sit still," said Ward quickly. He had no

desire to hear a sermon then, much less one that Big Smith had prepared.

“Then you don’t think Pond has the right of it in trying to pay for what the people in Vernon are doing for him, by putting in his best work here?”

“That’s not the proper way to look at it,” replied Big Smith dropping once more into his sepulchral tone.

“It ought to be a privilege, a great privilege for the Vernon people to know they are helping a man to be a preacher. Just think of the honor—three boys going out from the same place, at the same time, and for the same purpose. Yes, I think it’s a great thing.”

“Then Little Smith is going to be a preacher too, is he?”

“Yes, George is of the way too. He’s been reading hymns aloud all the afternoon since the Bible class. His voice isn’t heavy enough yet though.”

“Do you know what I think of you?” said Ward impulsively rising. “I’d give more for Pond’s little finger than I would for your whole body. You haven’t made a decent recitation since you’ve been in Weston. You haven’t even got the confidence of the fellows; you haven’t got a soul big enough to find with a needle. You——”

Ward suddenly stopped. In his sudden zeal he had thought that by denouncing his classmate, he was strengthening his own heart. Perhaps certain thoughts in his own mind had made him somewhat uncomfortable, and he found a certain kind of pleasure in speaking so sharply to another of his shortcomings, that his own would be lost sight of for the time.

“You needn’t go on, Ward,” said Big Smith rising. “What you’ve said is all uncalled-for. I think I know my duty and I sha’n’t turn from it. It isn’t earthly knowledge I need, but heavenly. The saints have always been persecuted and I don’t suppose I ought to be any exception. I am not angry. I shall try to heap coals of fire on your poor silly head, Ward. Yes, coals of fire.”

“Make ’em hot then, the hotter the better,” replied Ward, his anger returning in a moment. “I don’t want any whining——”

Ward suddenly stopped and both boys jumped to their feet. What was that? A dull rumbling had been heard, apparently beginning directly over them on the floor above. It had begun gradually, but steadily increased. Apparently it swept with a noise of thunder directly past the door of the room, and went on down the long winding stairway, with increased volume as it went.

“What was that? What’s that?” said Big Smith.

Ward made no reply as he dashed out into the hall. The boys from all the rooms came flocking out and ran rapidly together down the stairway to the first floor where the climax seemed to have come, although nothing could be heard now but the voices of the excited boys.

In a moment Ward and Big Smith were standing in the group which had gathered about the tall form of Mr. Blake, who also had rushed into the hall at the noise and now was holding a large cannon ball in his hand.

“Who rolled this down the stairs?” he said, looking about at the boys.

No one made any reply. Now that the alarm was over the boys were all laughing, although they saw that the door of the hall had been smashed by the ball, as it came to the end of its descent.

“Somebody might have been killed by it,” said Mr. Blake. “It’s an outrage. The boy that did it ought to be expelled. Who did it? Where did it start from?”

“I’ll see, Mr. Blake,” said one of the boys quickly running up the stairway and soon returning with an empty basket in his hand. “I found this on the top floor. It had a string tied to it and the string hung out of the window. It was somebody outside the building that pulled the string and probably tipped the ball out.”

“Go to your rooms, boys,” said Mr. Blake. “We’ll look into this later.”

“What do you think of wickedness in the school now, Ward?” said Big Smith as they started to return together.

Ward made no reply. He was thinking of the words he had heard Tim Pickard speak to Jack, and wondered whether they did not have some connection with the disturbance which had just occurred.

“Hello, there!” said one of the boys. “Ward, look at your chum, will you? What’s the matter with him?”

Ward turned quickly and looking down saw Henry standing in the hall below. His hat had been crushed

in, his clothing was all wet, and he himself was almost the picture of misery.

“Henry Boyd! what’s happened to you?” said Ward in astonishment.

“Never mind now, Ward,” said Henry quietly. “Come up to the room and I’ll tell you all about it.”

In a brief time they had entered their room, and Ward, after closing and locking the door, turned to listen to what Henry was saying to him.

CHAPTER X

BIG SMITH'S ASSERTION

“I’VE just had a little dose of the tender regard of some of your East Hall friends,” said Henry as he laid aside his wet clothing.

“My friends!” replied Ward. “I don’t know that I understand just what you refer to.” He had felt nothing but sympathy for Henry when he saw him in his plight, but here at the very beginning of his explanation he was virtually accusing him of having a share in his trouble, or at least so Ward considered it.

“I’d been up in Ned Butler’s room after the meeting,” continued Henry, “and when I came out of his room and went down the stairs I stopped just a minute on the steps by East Hall, and before I knew it down came a bucketful of water, and I was drenched from head to foot.”

Ward, who was feeling a little angry at his roommate’s implication that his friends had been at the bottom of the trouble, smiled in spite of his efforts to appear indifferent at Henry’s words, and made no reply.

“And that wasn’t all of it, either,” said Henry. “As soon as I felt the water I dodged back into the hall and ran through it to the other door. But just as I came out on the steps there, down came another pailful, and if I had had any dry spots left before on me, every

one of them was hit this time. I was as wet as if I had been in the river."

"I'm sorry for you, Henry," said Ward laughing this time outright. "But what in the world did you want to go back for? You might have known that they would be waiting for you at each end of the Hall. Why didn't you come straight on after you had started?"

"Oh yes, that's all very fine now! Why didn't I go and have it out with the fellows who did such a mean trick, right then and there? I wish I had."

"So do I," said Ward. "It was a mean trick. There's no mistake about that."

"You look as if you thought it was a mean trick!" said Henry angrily. "It may be mighty funny to you, but it isn't to me, I can assure you. I'm glad it wasn't any friend of mine that did it."

"No, I don't believe it was any friend of yours," replied Ward. "And I don't know what right you have to say it was a friend of mine either."

Ward, who did not try to put himself in his friend's place, was thinking only of Henry's charge now, and he was resenting it the more because he had a strong suspicion that after all he did know who had been the guilty ones. The words of Tim Pickard to Jack came back to him once more, and he was connecting them just now with Henry's mishap as well as with the recent disturbance in West Hall.

An interruption came just then as some one rapped on the door. "Come in!" called Ward, and Big Smith and Pond entered the room.

“We thought we’d come in and see what the trouble with Henry was,” said Big Smith. “I just caught a glimpse of him as he ran up the stairs, and I thought something was wrong.”

“He got a ducking over in East Hall,” replied Ward. “They caught him at each end of the hall.”

“Yes,” said Henry ruefully, “and that isn’t the worst of it. My best suit of clothes is ruined. My father went without a winter overcoat to get me that suit, and now those fellows have gone and spoiled it. It may be fun for them, but it’s a different tune I sing.”

“It’s a shame,” said Big Smith loudly. “It’s a shame. I’d report it to the doctor, I would.”

“What would you do, Pond?” inquired Henry.

“I hardly think I should do that,” replied Pond slowly. “It’s all fair enough to protect yourself of course. When a fellow comes up to Weston, he comes to get his money’s worth, as Dr. Gray said that morning in chapel when school opened, and you’ve a perfect ground for complaint now; but you’re not sure he could help you out, for you don’t know who did it, do you?”

“No,” said Henry hesitatingly, “but I feel pretty sure about it though.”

“Of course you do; but you can’t report suspicions. Besides, your clothes may not be so badly damaged as you think now. I should wait until to-morrow anyhow before I did anything. I don’t care the snap of my fingers about this nonsense the boys talk, about never letting on if you are abused. But after all, you may only make a bad matter worse. When they see you

don't make any fuss about it they may stop this nonsense."

"It's worse than nonsense," said Henry hotly ; "it's a cowardly trick."

"That's so !" said Big Smith solemnly. "I should report it at once. They might take up a collection in East Hall for you or get a new suit of clothes. Who knows ?"

"Yes, and they might bring over some of their old clothes too," said Ward with a sneer.

"That's so, I hadn't thought of that," said Big Smith, unmindful of Ward's manner. "It might be a privilege for those fellows to aid you. Most of the boys in East Hall have money, and if they heard of your loss they might be glad to make it good."

"Yes, and if he got more clothes than he wanted, he might divide up with some of the rest of us," said Ward. "Now here's Big Smith. He isn't more'n three inches taller than you, Henry, and anything you didn't care for, why you could turn it over to him. He wouldn't need any label then.

"A trifle too short
And a shaving too lean,
But a nice young man as ever was seen."

"I should be glad of anything Henry did not care for," replied Big Smith. "If I couldn't use it, perhaps my younger brother George could."

"I'm no swill barrel for the fellows to fire everything they don't want into," said Henry indignantly. "I'm provoked; of course I am. It's a mean, cowardly

trick to ruin a fellow's clothes as they have mine, and it means a lot of trouble for me, and for my father and mother. But I'm not going to whine about it. Pond's got the right of it; I'll wait till to-morrow and see what their condition is then. What can't be cured must be endured, I suppose."

"I hope it'll come out all right, Henry," said Pond as he arose from his chair. "There goes the gong, and it's time we were in bed. Good-night, boys!"

"You'd better think of my suggestion, Henry," said Big Smith as he left the room; but Henry made no reply and abruptly closed the door.

The next morning there were curious glances cast at Henry by a few of the East Hall boys when he came into the chapel, but as he apparently was not conscious of them, for he was trying hard to ignore all such attentions, there was little satisfaction to be gained.

Ward keenly watched the boys whom he suspected to be guilty, and was satisfied that he knew who had poured the water upon his room-mate; but he was still angry at the words of Henry and the implied charge that his friends had been the guilty ones.

In a measure, Ward knew that Henry was right, and perhaps the very knowledge of that fact increased his feeling of irritation at his chum. Already they were drifting apart, and although they had been warm friends from the time of their earliest boyhood, he felt that something was beginning to grow up between them that even the long friendship might not be able to overbalance.

"Very well," thought Ward a little bitterly,

“ Henry thinks Speckle and Tim are my friends, does he? All right, friends they are then, if he will have it so. He’s made a great fuss over a little ducking.”

He was strengthened in his thought by the fact that an examination that morning had shown that Henry had not suffered the loss he had feared; a pressing would make his clothing as good as before.

“ There’s no use, Ward,” said Jack, as he and Ward together passed out of the Latin room that morning. “ I thought last night when I heard Ned Butler talk that I would throw away my ponies and try for a while to do square work. But just see me this morning. I didn’t use a translation nor ask a fellow for help, and what was the consequence? A dead flunk and a lecture a yard long from Mr. Crane.”

“ You’ve been making a huge trial of it, Speck,” said Ward with a laugh. “ One recitation and then it’s all over. You’ve got grit, haven’t you?”

“ I’ve got grit, but I didn’t have the lesson. I noticed the valedic didn’t cover himself with glory either, this morning. What’s the trouble?”

“ Oh, I was thinking a bit about my chum, I guess,” replied Ward coloring a little, for he had failed in the recitation himself.

“ What’s the trouble with your chum?” Jack looked at him keenly as he spoke.

“ Oh, some of your brave fellows over in East Hall ruined a suit of clothes for him last night, that’s all. I say, Speck, that was a mean trick. You fellows that have plenty of money don’t know what it means for him and his folks too.”

“Pshaw! Henry needed a little wetting down. It'll do him good. Every fellow has to take his share. It's like eating a peck of dirt before you die. We all have to come to it. I have had to swallow my share, and I didn't squeal either.”

“It's all right for you. You can get another suit if you want it.”

“Nay verily, that I cannot. I couldn't even get the uniform, if the nine didn't furnish it. But it's a great advantage for Henry to have a little attention, and he and his father both will be thankful for it some day. They will, as sure as preaching.”

“How do you make that out?”

“Oh, his father sent him to Weston to get all the good he could here, didn't he? Well, don't you suppose the fellows can teach him some things as well as the teachers? I tell you some of the best lessons I've learned, the fellows have taught me.”

“I don't doubt it. And did you use a pony then?”

“Not much I didn't. But no joking, Ward, I never saw a fellow catch it yet in school if he didn't deserve it.”

The conversation ended as the boys passed into the Greek room, but Ward was thinking more of Jack's words than he was of the lesson. Somehow he was coming to believe that Henry had not shown a very good spirit when what he chose to call a harmless trick was played upon him. He had forgotten all about the meanness and damage now, and was even coming to pity himself somewhat for being compelled to room with such a fellow.

He had little conversation with his room-mate that day, and late in the afternoon they went together to Doctor Gray's to take supper with his family as they had promised to do. They were surprised to see Big Smith and his brother there when they entered the room, a discovery over which Ward was not at all pleased.

However he soon forgot his irritation in the pleasure he found in his conversation with Mrs. Gray. She was a motherly woman and having no children of her own, in a measure had adopted the boys of the school, as being in a special sense hers. The invitations to her home were highly prized by all the students, and even the "Tangs" never could find anything to say against her.

"Well, Ward," said the doctor when they all were seated at the table, "I suppose you are pretty well settled now. Have you been homesick any?"

"No—that is—yes—a little—not much," replied Ward, laughing in spite of himself at his own confession.

"That's only natural, Ward," said Mrs. Gray kindly. "I think when one first comes here, especially if he comes from a very different part of the country, he is apt to find the change a little marked. I know I did, and I found the mountains somewhat depressing at first; but now I don't think I should want to live away from them."

"That's just it," replied Ward. "Sometimes they seem to shut me out of the world, and then just because I can't get out, I suppose I want to all the more."

But I like the school and all the fellows—I mean the students—very much.”

“I’m glad of that. It doesn’t take long to make friends here.”

“I think it does,” spoke up Big Smith. “I haven’t made many friends yet.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Mrs. Gray; “but you will in time, I am sure.”

“No, I don’t think I shall, and I don’t know that I want to,” replied Big Smith, and Ward noticed that the sepulchral tones had returned.

“I’m sure you will,” said Mrs. Gray cheerily. “Perhaps you are a trifle lonely now.”

“No, I am not,” replied Big Smith. “But the boys are an ungodly lot. Only last night Henry was coming out of East Hall and somebody threw two pails of water upon him.”

Both Henry and Ward blushed and looked aghast at Smith; but not at all embarrassed he continued, “And all those East Hall boys are bad, I know they are. And the one who threw the water on Henry is the worst of all. It was Ned Butler who poured the water on him.”

CHAPTER XI

WORD FROM THE BURRS

“**N**ED BUTLER !” exclaimed Dr. Gray in surprise. “Oh no, I’m sure you must be mistaken.”

Neither Ward nor Henry could speak before Big Smith said very emphatically, “Yes it was, doctor, I’m sure it was. When a boy talks as he did in the meeting last night, there’s something wrong with him. And he never has been in the least friendly with the West Hall boys. He only says ‘Good-morning’ to me when he meets me. I’m sure he doesn’t like any of us.”

“What did Ned say last night in the meeting?” said the doctor, quietly ignoring all the other remarks of Big Smith.

“Oh, he said it was such hard work to do right. That he didn’t have much of rest and peace in his religion. Now I know that when a fellow talks in that way there’s something wrong with him, isn’t there, doctor?”

“No, I think not,” replied Dr. Gray. There was an amused expression upon his face as well as a troubled one. “Ned Butler is one of the most trusty fellows in all the school; I never have known him to do a dishonest or dishonorable thing yet, and I’m certain he

could not have been the one who played this trick upon Henry."

"So am I, doctor," said Henry, who had managed to find his voice at last. "Why, I'd just come from his room and left him there. He simply couldn't have been the one. And no great harm was done, anyway. I was troubled at first, because I thought my clothes were ruined, but there wasn't much damage done after all."

"I'm sorry this spirit has broken out in East Hall; but you can rest assured it will be checked at once. Mr. Crane is not a man with whom the boys can trifle in the least. We'll say no more about it for the present," said the doctor quietly.

The boys lingered after supper until the bell rang for the study hour. Mrs. Gray talked with them of their work and life, showed them views of the foreign places that she had visited, and completely won their hearts. "Now, boys," she said as they shook hands with her before they went, "I want you to remember that our home belongs to you too. Whenever you feel in the least homesick or lonesome, come and see us. We shall always be glad to have you come, and Saturday evenings we hold free for the students. You'll be sure to come, won't you?"

"Thank you," said Ward, "I know I shall," and the other boys also expressed their gratitude for her kind invitation, and the pleasure she had given them.

"The doctor's wrong," said Big Smith as they left the house together. "I know it was Ned Butler who poured the water on you, Henry. He thinks be-

cause he has a room over in East Hall that he can look down upon us West Hall boys. The idea that all the religion he's got is just enough to make him try to do right because it's right to do right! I must have a talk with him. I feel it's my duty to do that much."

"You've done enough to-night," said Henry angrily. "What business had you to talk as you did to the doctor, I'd like to know! The only comfort is the doctor didn't believe a word you said."

"I only said what it was my duty to say. I was taking your part, Henry."

"Well, wait next time till you are asked to," said Henry. He was becoming so thoroughly angry now that he could not trust himself to say more.

"That's always the way," grumbled Big Smith. "But then it's the way of the righteous, and I don't suppose I ought to complain. Wounded in the house of his friends."

Henry made no response, as he and Ward hastened up to their room. They had had little to say to each other throughout the evening, and each felt that somehow the gulf between them was becoming wider. Ward had known that the words of Big Smith concerning Ned Butler were too ridiculous to warrant any attention, but in spite of his admiration for him he had not felt as annoyed at the charge as he knew he ought. Perhaps the feeling that Ned and Henry were becoming such warm friends had something to do with it, and the consciousness that his own friends were not to be classed with Ned for a moment, tended to strengthen his irritation. And somehow it all combined to drive the impul-

sive Ward a little farther away from his room-mate, and to make him feel more strongly drawn to Jack.

On the following day there was great excitement in the school when it was known that a letter had been received from the Burrs, asking that the annual fall game should be played a week from the following Wednesday afternoon on the grounds of the Burrs.

Tim Pickard called the nine together, and as Ward, Henry, and Pond were now considered as sure members, they were summoned with the others. An eager and exciting conference followed, and the possibilities of success and failure were discussed again and again. When the meeting broke up, it was decided that the challenge of the Burrs should be accepted, and Jack, who was the secretary, was instructed to send the letter announcing the fact.

That same evening, after study hours were over, Jack and Tim Pickard came over to West Hall to solicit subscriptions for the expenses of the nine. Both Ward and Henry subscribed more than they felt they could afford, when they realized the efforts being made at home in their behalf; but neither had quite the courage to decline. As new boys they stood somewhat in awe of the school sentiment, and as for Jack and Tim who unhesitatingly urged all to give, it is only just to say that they had no appreciation of what the lack of money might mean to others.

"Here's Pond," said Jack as the boy he named entered the room. "He'll put his name down for five dollars, I know he will."

Ward looked keenly at Pond while Jack was speak-

ing, for he recalled what Big Smith had said concerning the way in which he had been sent to the school.

“I’m sorry, boys,” said Pond quietly; “but I can’t subscribe. The truth is I haven’t any money except what is given me, and I don’t feel that I have a right to use that in this way. I only wish I could,” he added eagerly. “No fellow in the school would be more glad to do it than I, but I can’t. I think of a little woman and what she’s doing at this very time probably, and I just can’t do it.”

“Who is she,” said Jack.

“She’s my mother. I could tell you what she’s doing for me, but I don’t care to, and I’ve two younger brothers who want to come up to Weston by and by. Some of you who have fathers, don’t know what it means to make such a struggle as she is making. I’ve never thought very much about it till I came up here. Sometimes I’ve thought I ought not to play on the nine, just because I can’t go in as some of you do.”

“Nonsense,” said Tim Pickard quickly, who to do him justice was not, with all his faults, an ungenerous boy. “We’re glad you’ve told us just the way it is, and of course we don’t want you to do this; all we want is for you to put up a good game when we meet the Burrs. There isn’t a fellow here that doesn’t think more of you for what you’ve said about your mother. And if the little Ponds are half as good as the big Pond, we’ll be mighty glad to have ’em come up to Weston, won’t we, fellows?”

All the boys heartily agreed to Tim’s words and Ward thought he saw a suspicious moisture in Pond’s

eyes, though he too joined in the laugh which followed Tim's lame joke.

"Here's B. Smith and L. Smith," said Jack, as the two brothers entered the room. "Now, Big Smith, what shall I put you down for?"

"What are you talking about?" replied Big Smith, looking curiously from one to another in the group of boys.

"Oh, we're taking up a collection; something that belongs to your line," and Ward laughed as he spoke.

"Yes, we're raising the money for the expenses of the nine. What'll you give?" added Jack.

"Not a cent, not a cent, sir. I don't believe in such things. The idea of your asking me for money. Money isn't anything I'm concerned about at all."

"I thought you were," said Ward.

"Not in that way. It ought to be enough for this school that it has such fellows as Pond and me here. I hope you'll never mention the subject to me again."

"All right, Smith, all right," said Tim with a laugh. "We've got enough as it is. Mr. Crane and the doctor always come down handsomely. They believe in the nine you know, and if we win, we'll get a lot more. We've made Blake open up too. He tried to smile, but he looked as if he had pain all the time he was doing it though. He's a gem, Blake is."

"Probably he couldn't do much," said Ward. He was thinking of the sounds he had heard in Mr. Blake's room several nights before, and of what the doctor had said as to his trying to provide for others as well as for himself.

“Nonsense!” replied Tim boisterously. “He could do it just as well as I could or as Big Smith here, though he hadn’t any such principles to overcome as this fellow,” and he slapped Big Smith on the back.

“You’ll be measured for your suits to-morrow, you three,” said Jack, as he and Tim left the room together.

“That’s what I call an imposition,” said Big Smith when they had gone. “The idea of his asking me for money.”

“It was tough,” and Ward laughed sarcastically. “He’ll remember next time, I’m sure.”

The intervening days were busy ones. The prospect of the approaching game was the absorbing topic in all the school, and with Ward it even absorbed time which ought to have been given to his lessons. Henry worked steadily on, although he was as interested as Ward; but work with him was first, and he held steadily to the line he had marked out for himself.

Ward already was dropping back in his class work, and the promise of being valedictorian of the class, which Jack had laughingly held out before him offered no attractions now. He spent most of his spare time in East Hall, and never tired of talking of the approaching game.

The eventful day at last arrived. Doctor Gray spoke of the game in the course of his remarks in the chapel, and the boys heartily applauded the hope of success he expressed.

Two of the teachers, Mr. Crane and Mr. Blake, were

to go with the boys, "To see that they did not miss the train after the game," as Jack expressed it, although this time arrangements had been made to carry the boys by carriages. All the available teams in Weston were hired and even Dorrfield contributed its quota. A large wagon, drawn by four horses, was to carry the nine, and there were seats in it for two besides the players.

"What! Big Smith, you going?" said Ward, as his classmate climbed into the wagon and took one of the two spare seats which the nine had.

"Yes," replied Big Smith, "I feel it to be my duty to go. You know some of the fellows are pretty tough, and I thought the doctor would be glad to have me go for the sake of my influence. I shall do all in my power to keep everything straight."

"It's very kind of you," replied Ward. "I hope the doctor will appreciate your generosity."

He said no more, but turned to look at the busy scene about him. About fifty of the boys were to accompany the nine, and the dozen or more carriages which had been engaged were already waiting for them. The nine were soon ready, and what a bright appearance they made in their new uniforms! Their eager faces and stalwart forms were an inspiration.

"We're all ready, I think, Tom," said Tim as he threw two bundles of bats into the great wagon. "Now, off you go. Give 'em a cheer, fellows," he added, turning and facing the crowd of boys who were to be left behind.

A rousing cheer followed his words, and amid the

calls and wishes for good luck the procession started. How Ward did enjoy that ride. There was a sense of his own importance as member of the nine, and added to that was the exhilaration of a ride through a new and beautiful country on a late September day. The sides of the mountains were covered with the varied and gorgeous tints of the autumn foliage. There was all the enthusiasm of young life too within and about him, and not even his feeling of jealousy at Ned Butler and Henry, who were seated together and apparently enjoying themselves to the utmost, could break in upon it now.

"I hope we'll feel as well when we come back," said Ward in the course of the ride.

"Never you fear. We've got 'em this time sure," replied Jack. "But here we are."

Ward looked quietly about him and at once forgot his fears. The buildings of the Burr Academy could be seen, and out on the ball field a crowd of people was waiting for them. There were carriages filled with girls, for Burr Academy was co-educational in its methods, and the grand stand was packed with people. Far down the lines they extended, and the sight was one to stir not only the feelings of Ward, but of all the approaching Weston boys.

"Give 'em a cheer, fellows," called Tim as they drove upon the grounds; and the Weston yell rose sharp and clear, the new boys joining in it with all the strength of their lungs.

CHAPTER XII

THE GAME WITH THE BURRS

AS Ward leaped lightly out of the wagon, he felt that never before had he had a share in such a stirring experience. He was conscious that the eyes of all the assembly were turned upon the little group of players who quickly gathered about Tim Pickard the captain of the nine, and the feeling of his own importance was considerably increased. It was the first time he had ever played in a game of such importance as this promised to be, and while naturally somewhat excited and nervous, he did not show it by his manner, and he was determined to do his best.

"Well, Ward," said Ned Butler cheerily, "do you feel tired after the ride?"

"Not a bit," replied Ward. "I'm just a little stiff; but a few minutes' practice will limber me up all right, I think. Do you feel excited?"

"Not much. You see this is my sixth game with the Burrs, and I'm becoming something of a veteran. Still I'm very anxious about the game. We're stronger than we were in the spring, and a good deal will depend upon the new material the Burrs have."

"That's the captain of the Burrs," said Jack, as a stalwart young fellow quickly approached the group. "He's their catcher."

“Hello, Shackford,” said Tim advancing to meet the rival captain. “Glad to see you.”

“So am I to see you. We’ve a crowd out to meet you, you see.”

“So I noticed. The road seemed to be full of wagons as we drove over.”

“They’re all expecting a good game and I hope we sha’n’t disappoint them. Your men can take the field now and practise awhile, while you and I are talking over the arrangements. Come over by the dressing room.”

Tim turned and directed the boys to take their places in the field while he withdrew for an interview with Shackford. The Weston boys ran quickly out upon the field, a wild cheer from the crowd following them, and soon took the positions they were to play in the game. Ward was in left field, Henry upon first base, Pond at third base, while Jack took his customary position as short stop, and Ned Butler stood near the home plate.

Two of the Burr boys volunteered to bat flies for the visitors, and in a moment the boys were scurrying about the field chasing and throwing the balls in every direction.

Ward’s feelings were not soothed when he saw a large coach, its top filled with girls, drive upon the grounds and take its position behind the line near to him in left field.

The girls all had little flags of the colors of the Burr Academy, knots of ribbon were fastened to their dresses, and a long streamer waved out behind the coach

as they approached. "They'll be watching me all the time," thought Ward, and though his heart began to beat a little more rapidly, to all outward appearance he was as calm and collected as ever.

Throwing had always been Ward's strongest point, and there was no one on the nine, unless it was Tim Pickard, who could throw the ball as swift and far as he; but his nervousness in the preliminary practice made him somewhat wild, and when Jack called out to him, "Steady there, Ward; you don't have to throw the ball clear to Weston," he laughed and replied that he would try to remember the caution.

"Keep your places, fellows," called Tim returning from his interview with Shackford. "The Burrs are to be first at the bat."

The time for beginning the game had arrived. The balls which had been used in practice were thrown in, and every player settled himself to the work before him.

A shout from the crowd went up as Shackford grasped his bat and started toward the plate. All the Burr boys united in the school yell, and the girls upon the coach near Ward waved their flags. The confusion abated as the umpire tossed the new ball to Tim and said, "Play!" The silence that followed was intense and Ward stepped nervously about in his position in left field. Tim stepped into the pitcher's box and drawing back his great left arm sent the ball with all his strength directly over the plate.

"One strike!" called the umpire, and a sigh seemed to rise from the crowd.

“Two strikes!” he called again, when once more the ball came whizzing in.

“Three strikes! Out!” said the umpire as Shackford made a desperate effort to hit the third ball, which Tim sent in with increased speed.

As Shackford turned toward the players’ bench and threw down his club in disgust, a shout went up from the Weston contingent, and Ward could see that both Mr. Crane and Mr. Blake were joining in it, as excited as any of the boys.

“That’s the way, Tim. Keep it up,” said Jack, and then turning toward Ward he added, “He’s their heaviest batter. Tim struck him out with the first three balls.”

“Keep quiet, fellows,” called Tim, who seemed to be perfectly cool and collected, although Ward thought he could see that he was greatly elated over his success.

“Look out for this fellow, Ward,” said Jack in a low voice as the second member of the Burr nine took his bat and advanced to the plate.

“One strike!” called the umpire.

“One ball, two balls,” followed, and then the batsman struck the next ball and sent it skipping over the ground directly into Jack’s territory. Ward started for it as if it were intended for him, but halted quickly as he saw Jack stop the ball and then dropping it for a moment send it to Henry just too late to catch the runner.

It was the turn of the Burr boys to shout now, and shout they did long and loud. The runner had gained his base and was dancing about trying to induce the pitcher to throw the ball.

Tim slowly and deliberately took his position again, and faced the next batter. "One strike," called the umpire. "What does he always say, 'one strike,' for?" Ward heard one of the girls on the coach say, but he was too much interested in the game to listen to what followed.

The next ball Tim sent in seemed to suit the batter exactly, and hitting it with all his strength he sent a liner almost directly into Pond's hands. Before the runner at first base could recover himself, the nimble Pond had sent the ball swiftly across the diamond and Henry had caught him a full yard from the base. Both were out and the side was out, and it was all done so quickly that a brief time passed before the crowd seemed to be aware of what had taken place. But it was only a brief time, for then such a shout went up from the Weston boys as had not before been heard on the grounds.

"That's the way to do it!" said Jack turning a somersault on the ground as Ward came in from the field. "Now if we can keep this up!"

Ward made no reply, as he was to be the third batter and he was already looking over the collection of bats trying one after another, and seeking the one which he thought would be best adapted to him.

He looked up as another cheer rose from the Weston boys as Ned Butler with his bat approached the plate. He had found the one he wanted now and leaning back upon it he watched Ned with breathless interest.

"One strike!" called the umpire, and Ward smiled as he looked down at the coach on which the girl was

seated who wanted to know why the umpire called "strikes" when the ball wasn't hit at all.

"Two strikes!" called the umpire.

"I hope Ned Butler isn't going to strike out!" said Jack who was standing by Ward's side.

"That doesn't look much like it!" replied Ward quickly, as Ned caught the next ball on the end of his bat and sent it far out into the field.

The shout of delight which went up from the Weston boys was quickly hushed as the nimble centre fielder of the Burrs caught the ball which settled directly into his hands, and an answering shout went up from the Burrs.

"Now, Henry, do your duty," said Jack as Henry walked past him to the plate. Ward watched his chum eagerly. He had never seen that look upon his face without knowing that something was likely to be done.

"Hi! Yi! Yi!" he shouted a moment later as Henry drove the ball over the head of the short stop.

"Go on! Go on!" called Tim who was near the first base, as Henry started down toward the second base. A moment of suspense followed, a cloud of dust arose as Henry threw himself upon the ground and slid face foremost toward the coveted bag, and then such a shout of enthusiasm went up from the Weston boys as made all the previous attempts seem feeble, when the umpire called "Safe at second."

"What's the matter with Ward Hill? He's all right," greeted Ward as his turn came; and a trifle pale, but with set teeth, he stood and faced the pitcher of the Burrs.

This pitcher was a little fellow, but "wonderfully

tricky," so Jack had declared. He had been a constant puzzle to the Weston boys and had been so long on the nine that he knew most of the peculiarities of each of the opposing players. Now a ball came in so slowly that it seemed scarcely to move, and then would come one that seemed almost to hum as it cut the air. He looked curiously at Ward as if were studying him, and then sent in a slow ball that Ward made a desperate effort to hit, but failed. A laugh from the Burrs greeted his efforts and Ward could see that the pitcher himself was smiling.

"I'll show him now," thought Ward, but before he had fairly drawn back his bat a swiftly thrown ball had struck him between the shoulders. Without hesitating a moment he started toward first base.

"Here, hold on!" called the pitcher. "He got right in the way of that ball."

"Not much he didn't," replied Tim hotly, and a warm discussion between the captains followed. Ward seated himself on the base to await the result, and began to talk with the first baseman.

"Hold the bag, Ward! It's all right," called Tim, as taking his bat he faced the pitcher for his turn. Whether it was his irritation or not, I cannot say, but when the first slow ball was sent in, Tim struck it with all his strength and sent it sailing far out over the right fielder's head.

In a moment it seemed as if pandemonium were let loose. The Weston boys stood up in their seats and shouted and waved their flags frantically, as if they would aid the runners by their efforts.

The confusion increased as Henry crossed the home plate, and Ward started from third base. Jack was running along the line beside him and calling, "Go it, Ward. Go on ! Go on ! You'll make it !" and just before the ball reached the plate, Ward crossed it and the run was scored.

"What's the matter with Ward?" "Three cheers for Tim Pickard!" "Another one for Henry!" were among the shouts and calls that followed from the excited spectators, and it was several minutes before the game could be resumed, with Tim still on third base. Unfortunately the next two men went out and when the Weston boys took the field again they had only scored the two runs.

And now the game went on with increasing excitement on the part of all. The Burrs scored two in the next inning, and their supporters cheered lustily. Then the Westons made one and the Burrs two and then the Westons two.

In the fourth inning another dispute arose, this time the Westons being the aggressors.

"That's right ; kick again," muttered the driver of the coach near Ward.

"Pardon me, but how many kicks do they have in a game?" said one of the girls to the driver, who looked at her in blank amazement a moment, and then impolitely burst into a loud laugh.

Even Ward was so tickled over her question that he could only find relief in turning somersaults and walking on his hands.

At last came the ninth inning. "It's a tie," said

Tim, as his boys took the field. "Now, fellows, be careful. Follow my calls every time."

What was the trouble? The first batter gained his base on balls. Was Tim becoming "rattled"? The next man struck out. "Ah, that was better," and a sigh of relief arose from the Weston supporters. But, alas, the next batter made a hit and soon there was a man on third and another on second, and only one out!

"And there comes Shackford to bat," groaned Jack, turning about and speaking to Ward, "Lie back for him, Ward, he's the heaviest hitter they've got."

Ward moved back as Jack and Tim indicated, and watched Shackford. He had a feeling of irritation toward the girls on that coach now, for with their constant treble, "Burr! Burr! Burr!" and the waving of their flags, he felt that he could do nothing if the ball should come into his territory.

Suddenly he heard Tim call, "Look out, Wa-a-r-d!" Shackford had hit the ball, and high in the air it looked as if it were going far out over his head.

Ward looked at it just an instant and then turned and ran with the ball, as if life itself depended upon his speed. He was dimly conscious that the crowd was shouting wildly, but not minding that or the redoubled shrill, "Burr! Burr! Burr!" of the girls, he sped on. He must catch that ball! What would the fellows think now, if he should muff it? The very honor of the school depended upon him. And shutting his teeth together and breathing hard, he turned just as the ball came down and settled directly into his hands, and was held.

“Home! Ward! Home!” shouted Tim, and quickly recovering himself Ward turned and threw the ball toward Ned Butler, who was standing on the plate. Swiftly and almost as straight as if thrown from a gun, the ball sped on. But the runner had started from third base, and it did not seem possible that it could overtake him before the run would be scored. No one was shouting now. The spectators were all standing and eagerly watching the outcome. Even the treble, “Burr! Burr! Burr!” had ceased. Ward was standing in the position in which he had thrown the ball, and it almost seemed as if his heart had ceased to beat, so tense was the strain.

On and on sped the ball, and on and on ran the runner. Ned Butler with outstretched hands was waiting for it, and just before the runner touched the plate he had the ball and fell upon the player.

“Out,” called the umpire and then the suspense was ended. Shouts and calls came from the Weston boys and Jack threw his arms around Ward’s neck as he came in from the field, trying to appear calm.

“Look there, will you, Ward?” said Jack. The Weston contingent had rushed down from their seats, and forming in line were approaching to the measure of their united cries, “Ward! Ward! Ward Hill! Ward! Ward! Ward Hill!”

“What’s the matter with Ward?” called one. “He’s all right!” came from the united crowd, and before Ward could fully realize what had happened, he was picked up by the excited boys and borne by them in triumph on their shoulders to the players’ bench.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER THE GAME

THE game was not yet ended however, and as the Weston boys took their turn at the bat in the closing half of the ninth inning, the strained feelings of the spectators became more quiet. The excitement was intense but somewhat subdued now, each play being watched with eager interest, and the shouts breaking forth only when the result of each movement was seen.

The players on each side were as excited as the crowd, and perhaps that fact accounted in part for the result which followed ; for try as they would the Weston boys could not get a man beyond second base. The inning closed with the score still a tie, seven runs having been scored by each side.

As Tim Pickard started for the field again, followed by his men, the umpire called him back and said, " Mr. Pickard, I'm going to call the game. It's almost dark now and by the time you come in to bat again, the ball can't be seen."

Secretly Tim was rejoiced at the umpire's words, for while in one way the darkness would aid his side, in another it might help his opponents as well, and he was content to let the game rest as it was. But it would never do to give up quietly, Tim thought, so he entered a vigorous protest against the decision.

In a moment the umpire was surrounded by a crowd of boys protesting earnestly, and the assembly also soon left their seats and gathered about the disputants.

"Oh, never mind, Tim," said Ned Butler quietly, "let it go. It's as fair for one side as it is for the other. Let it go."

"I suppose I'll have to," replied Tim, "but it's just being robbed of the game and that's all there is about it."

He felt in duty bound to keep up the appearance of protesting to the end, but apparently persuaded by Ned he turned to the umpire, who had stood quietly in the midst of the assembly saying nothing since his first quiet declaration, and said: "Very well. I feel as if we've been robbed of the game, but will abide by your decision of course."

"I'm sorry you feel in that way, Mr. Pickard," said the umpire quietly, "but I don't see that I can do anything else in justice to both sides."

As soon as the decision was known, the spectators began to leave the grounds, the students of each school vying with the others in the shouting and cheers for their favorite players.

"Ward, you did well," said Big Smith rushing up to him and shaking his hand cordially. "I've yelled till I'm so hoarse I can scarcely speak."

"Your voice sounds so," and Ward laughed. "Perhaps it'll strengthen your lung power after all."

"That's so," said Big Smith. "I hadn't thought of that. But I never thought I would make such a spectacle of myself. Why I shouted and shouted till

it seemed to me my voice would break. Still it may do me good as you say. That was a great catch and throw of yours, Ward. It was the best thing in the game."

Others gathered about him and added their words of congratulation and praise. "You saved the game for us, Ward," said Tim Pickard.

"That's what he did," added Jack. "We'll fix it up for you when we get back to Weston."

The words of praise were sweet to Ward, and the impulsive boy had great difficulty in trying to conceal his feeling of elation. All the boys of the school were eager to do him honor, and Mr. Crane and Mr. Blake added their congratulatory words, all of which was exceedingly gratifying to Ward. It was his first match game, and he felt that he had won a high place in the regard of his fellows.

"They're going to give us a spread before we go home," said Jack. "We've had it before. The diet of the Burrs is highly conducive to brain work, I can tell you."

"It seems to have made pretty fair ball players of them too," said Ward. "What is it they feed you on?"

"When the game's on Saturday, we usually have codfish balls, baked beans, and brown bread. I don't just know what they'll give us on Wednesdays. Perhaps it'll be veal, who knows? That'll remind you of the hash house and home, anyway."

Shackford here approached the boys and, as soon as Tim could gather his nine together, led them to the

dormitory of the boys, and they were taken by different students to their rooms, where they washed and prepared themselves for the supper which was to come.

The bell was soon rung, and Shackford led the visiting nine to a table which had been reserved for them in the large dining room. The boys and girls of the school came filing in and took their places at the various tables, casting many shy glances of interest at the table where the visitors were seated.

It was a new experience to Ward, and one that he thoroughly enjoyed. He was well satisfied with his work in the game, and as he was aware at times that the looks cast at him from different parts of the dining room indicated that he was the topic of conversation, his elation increased, although he was doing his best to appear unmindful of it all.

Honest success is a source of honest pride, and if Ward was proud of his success that day, there were few who felt like blaming him. Henry too had played a good game and Pond came in for his share of the praise.

"Your new men have greatly strengthened your nine," said Shackford, who as host was seated at the table of the visitors. "I confess I'm half afraid of the result when we come over to Weston in the spring for the return game."

"We shall do our best to give you a warm reception," said Tim.

"I don't doubt that," responded Shackford. "If you can play a tie game on our grounds, what will you do with us when you get us on yours?"

“We’ll have to wait and see,” replied Tim. “We’ll do our best, I can assure you.”

Ward was seated next to Jack with whom he was fast becoming a close friend, and was watching the room with a keen interest. It was all so different from the life at Weston. There the boys did not all eat in the same building, and there were no girls in the school.

“I rather think I like it better at Weston,” he said to Jack.

“Like it better? Well, I rather guess! Girls are all right, but I shouldn’t want them tagging around after the fellows in school time.”

“They don’t look as if they’d do very much tagging,” Ward said laughingly. “Do they come over when the return game is played?”

“Do they? Well, you’ll think they do. They’re very much in evidence too.”

The signal for rising was here given, and all the students stood up and waited for the visitors to pass out next behind the teachers. Ward felt somewhat abashed as he left the room, feeling that the eyes of all were upon him, but Jack and Tim were apparently all unconscious of the interest they were exciting.

“We’d better start for Weston at once, I think,” said Mr. Crane who with Mr. Blake had been seated at the teachers’ table.

“All right,” responded Tim. “We’ll go right up to the stable and order the teams.”

The boys shook hands with the teachers of the Burr Academy, thanking them for their hospitality, and started quickly for the stables.

When they arrived they found all the carriages ready except the great wagon in which the players were to ride, and the men at once brought out the horses which were to draw that.

"I say, Ward," said Big Smith, "did they give you a supper?"

"They did that," replied Ward. "Where'd you get yours?"

"I haven't had any. I think it's a shame. They might have known we didn't have any money. It's too bad to have to ride back to Weston like this."

"Better take up a collection," said Ward leaping into the wagon, quickly followed by Big Smith.

All was now ready, and the procession drove up in front of the academy to receive the teachers and students who were waiting there. Wagon after wagon was filled and started off amid the cheers of the assembled students, and soon all were gone except the one in which the nine was to go, and Doctor Gray's, in which Mr. Blake and one of the boys were to ride.

"Mr. Blake isn't quite ready. He'll be out in about five minutes. He's waiting for some books one of the teachers is going to lend him," said Shackford.

A chorus of groans and calls greeted this announcement, but there was so much going on about him that Ward was in no hurry to depart. The boys and girls filled the great piazza of the building and there was singing and laughing to be heard on every side.

"Poor Big Smith hasn't had anything to eat," said Ward to Jack at the same time looking back at Big Smith who sat directly behind him.

“That so? Poor fellow!” said Jack. “What have you been doing with yourself while we’ve been having the feast of reason and flow of soul, mostly flow?”

“Oh, I’ve been walking about the village and looking at the scenery. It’s beautiful in the moonlight,” replied Big Smith.

“Yes, and it’s mighty filling too. If you want to fatten up, Big Smith, let me commend to you the scenery around here. You want to look out or you can’t swallow all the moonshine.”

A shout of laughter greeted Jack’s words, but Big Smith made no reply.

“I say, Tim,” said Jack leaning forward and whispering something Ward could not hear in Tim Pickard’s ear.

“That’s the idea,” said Tim with a laugh, leaping out from the front seat to the ground.

“I’m with you,” responded Jack, and before Ward knew what was occurring Jack too had left his seat and joined Tim.

“Where are you going, fellows?” called Ward.

“We’ll be back in a minute,” responded Jack, and Ward gave no further heed to them as he was watching the group of students on the piazza.

In a brief time Jack climbed back into the wagon and then in a low whisper he said to Ward: “Take a look at the doctor’s rig, will you?”

Ward looked back and in a moment burst into a loud laugh. There stood the horse of Dr. Gray hitched to the buggy and standing with his head directly

against the dashboard. The boys had simply reversed his position and the poor beast was looking about as if he were trying to understand what it all meant.

The other boys rose in their seats, and as soon as the strange sight was seen they all broke out into shrieks of laughter. In a moment the students on the piazza came running down to see what it all meant and they too joined in the laughter, and the confusion increased each moment.

“Walk up, ladies and gentlemen,” called Jack standing up on the seat. “Behold Barnum’s latest curiosity. No longer are you compelled to offer twenty-five cents—a quarter of a dollar, ladies and gentlemen—to behold the latest marvel in the natural world! Here, without money, you can see this most wonderful discovery of modern times—a horse with his head where his tail ought to be!”

Renewed laughter followed Jack’s oratorical effort, which was interrupted by the declaration of Big Smith: “That’s all wrong, boys. It’s wrong. I’m going to fix it before Mr. Blake comes out.”

Groans followed Big Smith as he leaped out of the wagon, but the laughter was resumed when Jack resumed his speech: “Yes, ladies and gentlemen, and we will even allow you the privilege of seeing his keeper,” and he pointed to Big Smith, who was vainly trying to unfasten the harness, “another curiosity, almost equal to a horse with his head where his tail ought to be. A native of the wilds of Borneo, caught in his native den. A monster of such frightful mien as to be hated needs but to be seen. Walk up, ladies and gentlemen, before

the show starts for Weston Academy, where the specimens are to be deposited."

"I'm going to help him," said Henry, leaping out of the wagon, unmindful of the laughter which was renewed at Jack's second speech.

"There's Mr. Blake, Tom," said Tim quickly to the driver; "start on, we're ready now," and the driver at once picked up the reins and the great wagon started amid the shouts of laughter, leaving Henry and Big Smith behind.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RECEPTION

THE boys had not left the grounds of the academy before Ned Butler said in a low voice : “ Tim, you’re not going to leave those fellows behind are you ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Tim sharply ; “ why not ? They gave up their seats of their own free will. They’re having a good time. Just hear that,” he added as another burst of loud laughter arose from the piazza. “ They’ll have lots of help.”

“ But they can’t ride back with Mr. Blake. The doctor’s buggy will hold but two, and if Henry and Big Smith are left it will make four,” said Ned.

“ Oh, hold on, Tim,” interposed Pond ; “ you’re carrying a joke almost too far. Wait for the boys. It’ll only make trouble if you don’t.”

“ Can’t help that,” replied Tim ; “ I didn’t ask them to get out of the wagon. They did it because they wanted to. I’m not to blame, am I, if they choose to give up their seats with us and run their chances of having to walk back to Weston ? ”

Tim was speaking in the surly tone he used whenever he was angry, and all the boys became interested at once, as they knew that trouble was likely to arise.

“ Tom,” said Ned Butler to the driver, “ hold up your horses. Two of the boys have been left behind.

I'll run back and get them. Come on, Pond," and without waiting for the driver to heed his words, Ned leaped out of the wagon, quickly followed by Pond.

"The pious sneaks," muttered Tim. "Don't wait for them, Tom——"

"I think I'll have to wait, Mr. Tim," replied the driver. "It would never do for me to go back with four of the young gentlemen left behind. What would Dr. Gray say?"

"He's right, Tim," said Jack. "We won't have to wait long."

Tim made no reply and in a few moments the four boys came running back to the wagon and quickly climbed into their seats once more.

"I suppose we can start now, can't we?" said Tim sneeringly.

"Yes, we're all right ; go on, Tom," replied Ned cheerily. He showed no signs of anger, and in a brief time the good humor of all the boys was restored, that is, of all except Tim, who remained silent during the most of the homeward ride. Ned was so thoroughly liked and kept his good-nature so easily, that few of the boys could long retain a grudge against him, and in this case the most of them felt that he had only done what was right, after all.

There is in most boys an innate sense of justice and there is nothing they admire more than a quiet courage such as Ned had just displayed. Ward was troubled, however, for he knew that Tim Pickard would not soon forget the incident ; and while he knew that Ned would not be the one to suffer from his attentions, he was fear-

ful that trouble might be in store for Henry. And yet he was somewhat angry with his room-mate. Why should he interfere in a harmless prank of the boys? Surely it was not necessary for him to rush in as he had done. And he would only draw upon himself the anger of the fellows, and he too would be compelled to share in his chum's disgrace.

He became more and more irritated at Henry, although he did not stop to consider that by "the fellows" he meant Tim Pickard, Jack Hobart, and a few of their boon companions.

"Boys," said Big Smith solemnly, breaking in upon the silence which followed the return of the boys, "I feel ashamed of Weston Academy to-night. That was an outrageous trick. The idea of reversing Mr. Blake's horse! I wonder how you thought he was going to return. Either his horse would have to walk backwards, or if he went ahead he would push the buggy backward. I don't see what you did it for."

"To give you a chance to boot-lick," sneered Tim.

"Well I'm going to report it to Dr. Gray as soon as we get back."

A groan arose from all the boys at the threat, but not in the least frightened, Big Smith in still more solemn tones said: "Yes I'm going to report it to Dr. Gray. I feel it to be my duty to do so."

"Oh no, you don't," said Ned good-humoredly. "It's all over now and no harm done. Let's give 'em another cheer," he added as the sound of a shout from the now distant school came faintly to their ears.

In a moment the boys had united in the Weston yell,

and as soon as it was over, Ned said: "Jack, is it true that you made arrangements for a return game on our grounds this fall? I thought I heard something of the kind."

"Yes," said Jack quickly. "As this game was a tie, Shackford himself suggested that we play another one this fall, and not wait till spring for the return game."

"Good!" said Ned; "and when is it to be played?"

"Oh, we'll have to have it within ten days or two weeks or the snow will be on us."

"Snow?" said Ward; "snow in October?"

"Sometimes. Snow's the best crop Weston raises."

"Except boys," and Ned laughed.

"Yes, snow's here most of the year," said Tim joining in the conversation. "It's as eternal as the grin on Big Smith's face."

A few of the boys laughed at the ill-natured remark. "What gives you that grin?" said Tim again. "Is it a part of your stock in trade? Is that the way you're going to do when you're invited to see all the old ladies and little infants?"

"I feel it to be my duty," said Big Smith soberly, "to cultivate a pleasing manner. A smile may be an instrument of tremendous power. Why should I not show my desire to please to all around?"

"Yes, that's so," said Jack striving to imitate the very tones of Big Smith. "Now I've noticed that the bull dog Tim owns, and which Professor Mike keeps for him for the small consideration of fifty cents a week,

board and washing not included, almost always has a grin on his face when I come around. I don't know whether it's because he thinks he loves me so much he wants to eat me, as my mother used to say to me when I was a little fellow, or because he's jealous. I have conscientious scruples about feeding Tim's pet, though. I feel it to be my duty—not to,” and Jack spoke in exact imitation of Big Smith.

A shout of laughter followed his words, even Ned and Henry being compelled to join in it, so ridiculous did the drawling tone sound when used by Jack.

“Oh, but you have fed him, Jack,” and Ned laughed. “I've heard about it.”

“Not much to mention,” replied Jack. “Only the sleeves of two coats and the seat of one pair of trousers. I felt it to be my duty to quit then. I was afraid such a diet would spoil his natural disposition, and I wouldn't miss that grin for nine hundred worlds, no not for nine hundred and ten.”

Good feeling was now somewhat restored, although Tim still took but little part in the conversation, and when he did speak it was in such a surly manner that the boys made no reply. Few could resist the influence of Ned Butler, and Jack's bantering remarks were always taken in good part.

They gave the school cheer before every farmhouse they passed, and when the inmates rushed to the door, as they did in almost every instance, to learn the meaning of such strange calls, the boys would break into a song, and the country people would say, “Oh, it's the Weston boys.”

“ You see we’re known throughout the land,” Jack would say. “ Now give them another, fellows,” and a song or shout would invariably follow.

“ Look there, will you, fellows ! ” said Ned, when at last the great wagon turned into Weston. “ The news has arrived. ”

The boys saw a huge bonfire on the campus and about it were groups of boys leaping and running, looking weird-like in the shifting light. But as soon as the shout of the nine was heard, a rush was made toward them, and in a moment they were surrounded by a crowd of eager, shouting boys.

“ What’s that they’re doing, Jack ? ” said Ward, as he noticed that the four horses were quickly unhitched, and a long heavy rope was tied to the wagon.

“ Oh, the fellows are going to draw us up to the grounds. That’s the regular thing, you know ; only they haven’t had a chance very lately to try it on. Hello, they’ve got the band too ! ”

The notes of the Weston band could now be heard as it approached. This was a band famous in all that region, and the ten or twelve men who composed it could now be seen approaching, and each player was evidently trying to blow his loudest.

“ That’s the way with these fellows,” said Jack laughingly. “ They don’t any of them think they are playing ; they are not doing their duty,” and Jack drawled out the words and looked at Big Smith as he spoke, “ unless they blow with all the wind there is in them. That’s music in Weston. I wish they’d come into Mr. Blake’s class in physics and learn the difference

there is supposed to be between a musical sound and noise. Go it ; that's right ! " he added as one of the instruments shrieked out far above its fellows.

" What's that they are playing ? " said Ned.

" Why, it's ' See, the conquering hero comes. ' Don't you know that ? " replied Pond joining in the laugh that greeted the words.

There was now a scene of confusion, and yet it was one which all the nine heartily enjoyed. The boys of the school, or as many of them as possible, seized the long rope and began to pull. The band had fallen into line in advance of them, and the noisy procession started up the street.

" This is too much glory for one day, " said Ned. " Just think of it ! To tie the Burrs, to be drawn in a chariot into Weston, and then to have a brass band too. Ah, this is too much. Even Alexander couldn't have wanted more than this. "

" No, Aleck wasn't in the same class with us, " was Jack's merry reply.

On up over the hill, along through the wide village street, all unmindful of the huge bonfire which a few of the boys had been left to watch, moved the procession. Shouts and songs mingled with the notes of the band, which now had changed its tune to " Hail to the chief, " and the entire experience was one into which Ward was entering with heart and soul. The school yell was constantly heard, and the boys in the wagon were standing up and joining in the confusion.

" Where are they going ? What are they up to now ? " asked Ward as they halted near East Hall.

“Mr. Crane must be back, and they are going to get a speech from him, I guess,” replied Jack, pausing just long enough to reply to the question.

Mr. Crane responded to the repeated calls which were made for him to appear, and spoke a few words of congratulation, and then the procession started on again, cheering as it went. Other teachers were called upon for speeches, and at last the entire body halted before the home of Dr. Gray.

The doctor came forth in response to the call, and standing on the steps of the piazza, addressed the boys. He expressed his interest and pride, that after two years of successive defeats they had at last succeeded in tying, if not winning, a game on the grounds of the Burrs. “And, young gentlemen,” continued the doctor, “much as I rejoice in the success of the nine, far deeper is my satisfaction that Mr. Crane has brought back the word that each one of you conducted himself as a gentleman should. To-night I am proud of you. I want the fact that a boy is a student here to impress upon him that he is and is to be true as steel and is to be trusted at home or abroad. I want the Weston name to mean that every graduate is manly and upright. I am more proud than I can tell you to-night, both at the report of your success in the game, and of your bearing and conduct among the students of the Burr Academy. In recognition of all this I want in behalf of the teachers to give a supper to the nine next Saturday evening at seven o’clock in the dining hall.”

“Three cheers for the doctor!” called Ned Butler, as the principal turned to enter the house. The cheers

were given with a will and the doctor bowed in recognition to the boys, and then the crowd began to disperse. "To the bonfire," was the cry now, and the nine leaped out of the wagon to join their fellows.

"Where's Big Smith going?" said Ward quickly, as he saw him leave the others and go up on the piazza.

"He's going to tell the doctor what happened to his horse," replied Jack. "It's his duty, I suppose. Never mind, Ward; come on now down to the fire," and soon both boys were in the midst of the noisy crowd upon the campus.

CHAPTER XV

A WORD FROM MR. CRANE

THE chapel bell rang out the hour when the boys had to report in their rooms, and as a consequence the bonfire was not long continued ; but the noise and smoke had combined to make Ward's voice so husky that when he entered West Hall he could hardly speak above a hoarse whisper.

Henry was already in the room, and the exciting events of the day were sufficient to cause the boys to forget for the time being the feeling that had been growing up between them, and they conversed with something of their old-time freedom.

The game with the Burrs, the prank they had played upon the doctor's horse and over which Henry now laughed good-naturedly, the "grand-stand play" of Ward's, as Jack had termed it, the ride back to Weston, and the reception there, were all topics of conversation long after the lights were out and Mr. Blake had rapped upon their door to satisfy himself that both boys had returned to their room.

"Well, Big Smith," said Ward as he overtook his classmate next morning on his way to the chapel, "did you have a good time at the doctor's last night?"

Big Smith scowled slightly as he replied : "Oh, yes, I suppose you would call it so. Still I never expect to

have many good times as you call them ; I haven't any right to look for them. I'm here to do my duty and I don't look for any other reward."

"There go the four strokes," said Ward quickly as the chapel bell began to give forth its sharp sounds indicative that it was time for all honest boys to be in their seats. "We'll have to hurry now," and both boys broke into a run.

"String out, Ward! Str-ing-o-u-t!" came as a sharp call from the direction of East Hall ; and Ward saw Jack running at full speed, as usual striving to adjust his collar on the way.

"I'm not going to wait for that fellow a minute," said Big Smith increasing his speed and soon entering the chapel.

Ward began to delay, hoping that Jack would come up before Mr. Blake should close the door ; but before he came the teacher had turned, the door was closed, and both of the boys were barred out.

"Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now," said Jack dolefully. "I'm sorry I kept you out too, Ward ; but the fact is, I only waked up about three minutes ago."

"Haven't you had any breakfast?"

"One small cracker, a corresponding bite of cheese, and a mouthful of Weston water. I keep these on hand in case of an emergency. But I say, Ward, come on with me down to Ma Perrins'. We'll have time enough for me to get a bite of breakfast before the Latin class. Come on."

"All right. We might as well be hung for a sheep

as a lamb," replied Ward as he hastened along by the side of his friend to the home of "Ma" Perrins. This was just under the hill beneath East Hall, and the boys soon entered and Ward took his place at the table with Jack.

"I kept some breakfast for you, Mr. Hobart," said Mrs. Perrins pleasantly. "I thought you might be a little late the morning after the game."

"Thank you," replied Jack as he began at once upon the breakfast before him. Ward glanced about the room while he waited for Jack. How different it all was from the dining hall of the academy! There was an air of comfort here, and the table was spread with a breakfast that did not very much resemble the one he had had that morning.

He declined the invitation of Jack to join him, but the feeling of dissatisfaction which of late had been creeping over him, deepened. It was not that he was envious of Jack,—no one could feel angry at him long,—but his own plain manner of life had never seemed so distasteful to him before.

"Got your Cicero, Ward?" inquired Jack, stopping a moment in the midst of his occupation.

"No," replied Ward guiltily. "I haven't a word of it. I've got to trust to luck this morning not to be called up." He thought how hard Henry had worked on his lessons before the nine had gone to Greenville on the preceding day, and his feeling of irritation increased.

"You needn't trust to that," said Jack. "Mr. Crane will be sure to have you up on the hardest place

just because of your grand-stand play yesterday. He likes baseball, but he very foolishly says he doesn't ever want it to interfere with lessons. I suppose he feels it his duty to haul the players up."

Ward laughed, for Jack had drawn out his last sentence in exact imitation of Big Smith, and then said: "It's all up with me, if that's the case. I've trusted to luck."

"Here, take this," said Jack, drawing a piece of paper from his vest pocket and tossing it to Ward. "Look it over while I finish my breakfast."

Ward unfolded the paper and saw that it was a translation of the morning lesson, evidently a page cut from some book. His cheeks flushed slightly and he did not catch the amused expression upon Jack's face, who was watching him keenly over the coffee cup he held in his hand. Ward hesitated a moment and then opened his book and began hurriedly to compare the Latin with the translation.

"Thank you, Ma," said Jack soon rising from the table. "You've saved me this time; I'll never forget you, never."

Mrs. Perrins smiled benignantly as the boys left the house, Ward meanwhile handing the translation back to Jack without saying a word.

"Come on, Ward," said Jack. "The chapel's just out. We're in time for Latin, anyway. Hello, what's all the trouble?" he added quickly, as he saw by the actions of the boys as they came pouring out of the chapel that something was wrong.

The students were walking in groups and talking in

loud tones, some of them shaking their heads and gesticulating with their hands as they frequently stopped and talked excitedly together. There were angry looks too, and it was at once apparent that Jack's surmise was correct.

"We're in for it now," said Tim Pickard catching sight of Jack and Ward, and running toward them.

"We've got shut off in great shape."

"What's all the trouble about?" said Jack.

"Oh the doctor read us a lecture this morning. He told us first how proud he was of the game we played yesterday, and then he mentioned Ward by name and praised his great play. Of course all the fellows looked over to smile on little Ward, but lo and behold he was not. So you lost that."

"Too bad, Ward, too bad!" said Jack soothingly patting Ward on the back. "But go on with your story."

"Well, then he got around to the fixing of his horse. He said it was disrespectful to Mr. Blake and could not go unpunished; and then he informed us that no return game would be played this fall. I'd like to know who went and told him of it. It was either Mr. Blake or Henry Boyd, and I rather think it was Henry."

"No, it wasn't Henry," said Ward quickly.

"Well, who was it then?"

"It was Big Smith," said Jack, "and there he is now," and he pointed to his classmate who was just coming out of the chapel.

A shout of anger and derision greeted his approach and all the boys turned and looked at him. But Big

Smith moved calmly on, apparently unmindful of the feelings of the others, his face still retaining the look of self-approbation which it had borne since he had entered the school.

“We’ll fix him,” said Tim, as Jack and Ward left him to enter the Latin room.

They took their seats with the others, and Mr. Crane unmindful of the angry glances of which Big Smith was the recipient, at once called the class to order and began the recitation. And now Ward’s thoughts were withdrawn from the excitement of the morning to the work before him. He did not know a word of the lesson and was in an agony of fear lest he should be called upon. Although his work had been steadily slipping back for several days, he had not yet made a complete failure in any recitation, and his pride was yet strong. Henry was called upon and did well. Another and another followed, Ward breathing a little more freely after each name was called as it brought the recitation nearer to an end, and lessened his chance of being asked to recite.

The hour was about half over and he was beginning to breathe more easily when he was startled by the quiet words of Mr. Crane, “Hill, you may translate.”

Ward hesitated a moment. Should he rise and try, or simply say that he was unprepared? Just then Jack thrust into his hand a piece of paper and Ward instantly knew what it was. It was the translation he had seen while Jack was at breakfast.

His decision was instantly made and he arose from his chair. Mr. Crane apparently was not looking at

him, and with a sly movement Ward slipped the printed page into his book. His face flushed, and the knowledge that the boys behind him could see what he had done, made his heart beat rapidly.

“Begin, Hill, if you please,” said Mr. Crane, and Ward slowly began to read from the translation. For several lines he read on without interruption. His voice was trembling and the words seemed to dance before him, but he stumbled on until Mr. Crane said quietly: “That will do, Hill. You have either made a mistake in translating the wrong place, or you have made a mistake in the place of the translation. Please bring me that piece of paper in your book.”

Poor Ward in an agony of shame advanced, and while a suppressed titter ran around the class, he laid the paper on the desk and returned to his seat.

“Hobart, you may read,” said Mr. Crane quietly.

With a comical expression of despair on his face Jack arose. He had not the slightest idea where the place was, or that he could translate it if he knew. There were however two or three places in the lesson he thought he knew, and beginning he translated the first of these as rapidly as he could.

“That’s not the place, Hobart,” said Mr. Crane quietly.

“Oh, I know now,” replied Jack, beginning at another of the portions he thought he knew.

“That’s not the place either,” interrupted the teacher.

“Oh, I know now,” said Jack glibly, beginning at the third and last of the portions he knew.

"No, that's not it," said Mr. Crane. "You haven't it yet."

"Well, that's what my book says," replied Jack in desperation.

"I don't want the book, I want you."

"Well, Mr. Crane, I think you've got me," and Jack sat down as unconcerned as if a failure were a matter of every-day occurrence. A suppressed laugh followed Jack's declaration, and even Mr. Crane was smiling, as he glanced up and restored order.

"Now G. Smith you try it."

Big Smith arose and with a benignant smile, and in his deepest tones, translated. He was all unmindful of the sneers upon the faces of his classmates, and read on and on, as if he were only "striving to do his duty."

A word of approbation from Mr. Crane when Big Smith took his seat increased the smile upon his face, and thoroughly satisfied with himself he beamed upon all in the room as if he pitied their inferiority.

"I want to see you in my room in East Hall this evening, Hill," said Mr. Crane when the hour was over and the boys were leaving the room.

"Very well," replied Ward, "I will come."

Ward was keenly stung by his disgrace and dreaded the meeting with Mr. Crane for he thought he knew what he would say; but striving to appear unmindful of his failure he joined the group of boys standing outside the door.

"Ward, the doctor's given up the dinner for the nine," said Jack as he approached.

"Why?"

“ Oh, it’s all a part of Big Smith’s duty, I suppose.”

“ Never mind Big Smith now,” said Tim. “ We’ll attend to him later on. I’ll give the nine a dinner myself. They sha’n’t all be losers for his meanness.”

“ Good for you, Tim,” said Jack. “ When and where is the feast to be?”

“ Oh, I’ll fix that. I don’t know whether I can get it up before mountain day or not?”

“ Mountain day? What’s that?” inquired Ward.

“ Oh, that’s a day we have off. It’s next Wednesday, if it’s pleasant. Instead of having a half-holiday we have all day. The fellows, that is the most of them, go up on the top of the Hump—that’s the highest hill around here—and stay all night. We’ll have the biggest time in your life, Ward.”

“ I think I shall go,” said Big Smith benignantly as he joined the group. “ It ought to be a great help to the soul to see the sunrise from the Hump.”

“ Of course it is,” said Tim laughing and slapping Big Smith on the back. “ We want you to go with us. You’re a new man and we want to do all we can for you,” and Tim winked meaningly at the other boys, most of whom at once knew what he meant.

CHAPTER XVI

THE INTERVIEW

“**I** WANTED you to come and see me,” said Mr. Crane that evening when he had welcomed Ward in his rooms in East Hall, “because I felt that it was time that something should be done. The task is not a pleasant one, and you can readily see that the motive which influenced me was not one that most concerned myself.”

Ward made no reply. The remembrance of his disgrace in the Latin room was too keen to permit him to feel at ease in the presence of Mr. Crane, whom he both liked and respected. He was sitting uncomfortably in the chair to which he had been motioned upon his entrance, but he was not looking at the teacher. He was watching one spot in the carpet and seldom lifted his eyes, although the words he heard were plainly spoken in Mr. Crane’s most cordial tones.

“The life here is very different from that to which you have been accustomed, is it not?” said Mr. Crane.

“Yes, sir,” replied Ward, glancing up a moment as he spoke.

“I thought so ; and for that very reason it presents new problems and new dangers to an impulsive boy like you. You already have made friends, I see. May I ask who they are?”

“ Oh, I like all the boys, but I suppose I’ve been around most with Jack Hobart and Tim Pickard, although I’ve seen considerable of Pond, and Big Smith, and some others.”

Mr. Crane smiled as Ward rapidly mentioned the names by which the boys were known among their fellows, and then said soberly : “ Well, Hill, I didn’t ask you to come here and listen to any gossip about the boys, but you know that Hobart and Pickard come from wealthy homes, and the life they have been accustomed to is far different from yours.”

“ Then you don’t think I ought to go with them ? ” inquired Ward quickly.

“ I do not say that. What I mean is that the contact with boys who have had such surroundings as they have had, sometimes presents special temptations to others. Not that I think they would intentionally lead you into evil, at least I hope not, but there is often a feeling that such boys are the leaders. Sometimes their wealth, sometimes their easy-going ways and views of life, cause others to be led away almost unconsciously. May I ask whether you attend the school prayer meetings or not ? ”

“ Yes—that is, not always. I’ve been once,” said Ward in desperation. “ But then you see, Mr. Crane, Big Smith and some others of the boys always preach to us there. Somehow they act as if they felt that they must reach out and pat the rest of us on the head.”

“ I know, I know,” said Mr. Crane quickly, and Ward thought he detected an amused expression on the teacher’s face as he spoke ; “ but they furnish but a

small portion of the meeting, after all. There are some of the boys who avoid cant and who could help you, I am sure."

"Yes, sir ; there are Ned Butler and Pond. They're both good fellows."

"They are noble boys ; there is no doubt about that. However I don't care to urge the matter. I only thought it would be a help to you. Somehow it's so much more easy to do wrong than to do right, that every safeguard one can get makes it the better for him. But, Hill, your class-work has been dropping lower and lower of late. Why is that?"

"I suppose it's because I haven't studied. But, Mr. Crane, I never used a translation in class before to-day. I never did, honestly."

"I am sure of that, and I hope you never will again. We will say no more about that just now," said Mr. Crane quietly. "But tell me why you haven't studied."

"I don't know. I just haven't, and I can't give any excuse ; I'm ashamed of myself."

"I'm glad to hear you say that. I want to tell you frankly, Hill, that I don't think there are any boys in your class who can do better work than you, if you will try. That is why I am talking to you. If you were doing your best I should say nothing but words of praise. You owe it to yourself, to your father and mother, to the school, and to some one else, not to waste your best self as you are certainly doing now."

At the words of Mr. Crane, Ward's eyes became soft and almost filled with tears. He was thinking of his

home, and the vision arose before him of his father and mother, and what they were sacrificing to enable him to study at Weston. Surely he did owe them something, and the determination to do better came quickly into his mind. "But you mentioned some one besides myself, the school, and my father and mother, Mr. Crane, to whom I owed it to do better. I don't know that I understand you. Do you mean Dr. Gray?"

"Listen, Hill, and I will tell you a story that I have never told to any one before." Ward glanced quickly at Mr. Crane. The teacher was not looking at him, and seemed for the time almost unconscious that any one was with him in the room; his face had an expression Ward had never seen there before, and his eyes were partially closed. He felt a strange feeling of awe as Mr. Crane went on almost as if he were talking to himself.

"About twenty years ago there came a lad of about your age here to school, Hill. He was an impulsive fellow, easily swayed and yet a little bitter with himself, and not feeling that the world was using him just right. His father and mother had both died the preceding year. He was left without a near relative in all the land, and he had no money with which to keep himself. It was only through the kindness of Dr. Gray, who was himself then only a young man, that he could come here at all.

"The boy learned easily and took to his books. I think I may fairly say that he was popular with his mates, and was not disliked by the teachers. But there were times when his heart was hard. He would

see some of the other fellows whose fathers, or mothers, or brothers, or sisters would come up to visit them, and then his own loneliness would come over him like a cloud. Then he would see others among the boys who took life so easily. They did not study much, they were in most of the school scrapes, and seemed to be having the very best kind of a time, and the boy would be seized with a wild impulse to join them. Why should he dig and grind when others seemed to have such a good time? Then he would neglect his work and try to enter into the scrapes the others indulged in ; but he could not be content. He had a conscience, and it troubled him. He tried hard to deaden its voice, but it would give him no peace. And then he would go back again in sheer desperation to his studies and would work harder than before at them. But he was not happy even then. His lack of money made him bitter. He felt as if no one cared much whether he did well or ill.

“He had been here about a year, and although his work was uneven, he had a good standing, and in a way was liked and respected in the school. But he had made few warm friends. When he was with the more fortunate boys he felt the difference most bitterly. When he was with those who were known as the good boys, his soul drew back at times. They seemed to him to be professional and filled with ‘cant.’

“I don’t know what would have become of him if, at about that time, he had not been introduced to a young man who at once became his greatest helper. He was a young man, only a little past thirty, and

had known all about poverty and hard work. He had known too what it meant to have his best friends turn their backs upon him and to be misunderstood by all. But he never lost heart. He just lived to help others. No one was so bitter that he could not make his heart grow softer by his own gracious smile. He seemed to understand all about how every fellow felt. Those who were discouraged, or had fallen into bad ways, seemed to appeal to him the most. And he was strong too, the strongest men I ever knew. I never knew whether he was an athlete or not, but he was so strong that the little things which moved others never seemed to touch him in the least. He never gave up, but he kept steadily on till the end came, for he died, Hill, when it seemed as if his work had only begun. But his death was not the hardest thing for him to bear. I think he felt much worse about the fact that those for whom he had done the most seemed to forget all about him when his trouble came. But he never flinched. He just kept right on till the end came.

“When he was gone, and it was too late, his friends,—for he had looked upon them as friends all the time, although they had forsaken him—began to see what it was he had done. He was a teacher, Ward, and the best teacher I had ever known. And he had been all the time teaching these friends how to live. He never told them why evil was in the world, but he did tell them how to meet it. He did not explain a great many things which I think I should have liked to hear him explain, but he showed every one he met how to be a true man. He was the bravest, the most gentle,

the most sympathetic man I ever met. He was all the time appealing to every one to do his best, and a great many began to do better, more because they wanted to please him than from any other reason, I think.

“Well, it was this boy’s privilege to meet this great teacher here at Weston, and from that time he did not feel that he was alone in the world any more. He knew there was some one who cared whether he did his best or not. And so he used to try, sometimes when he did not care much himself, just to please this friend. And he became better acquainted with him all the time, for this man would be in his rooms, and would go with him sometimes into the class, and he did not leave him even when he went down upon the ball field.

“And the boy seemed to appreciate the man’s love more and more. There were times, again, when he felt bitter and almost desperate, and would say that it didn’t make any difference what he did. He might just as well go in and have as good a time as the other boys. But one look from the man’s eyes—he had wonderful eyes, Hill, and I have read that at one time when he turned and looked at one of his friends, just looked at him once, Hill, the friend was almost crushed, for he was doing wrong at the time, and he knew it; and he ran out of the place where they were, out into the darkness, and sobbed and cried as if his heart would break, just like a little child, Hill—just one look from that man’s eyes would make the boy feel ashamed; and many a time he went up into his room, and I suspect he sobbed just as this friend of the man’s had done of whom I just told you.

“Then too, the boy would be tempted to do wrong. He was an affectionate, impulsive boy, and fell into evil so easily ; but just one touch of the man’s hand would help to draw him back again. And his hands were as wonderful as his eyes, Hill. They showed the marks of the suffering he had had at one time. They were gentle hands too, Hill, so gentle that he used to carry the little children with them, and yet so strong that it seemed as if they would never let anything go they had once grasped.

“This friendship between the boy and this man grew deeper. He taught the boy how to work, and how to talk, and how to meet his fellows. He used to show him more—he showed him just how to live. He showed him what life meant, and although he did not tell him why many of the things came to him that did come almost every day, yet he made him feel all the time that he was learning. I think it must have been like that thread in the labyrinth we were reading about to-day. It did not show the way very far ahead, but it helped one to find it all the time, and finally led out to the sunlight and the open air.

“Well, Ward, I can’t explain it all to you now, but finally the man died as I told you, and yet he was only a young man at the time. Somehow it was something in which I fear even the boy had a share that brought on his death, and it was an awful death too. But he did not forget the boy. He left a will and when they read it they found that he had left everything he possessed to him.”

“What did the boy do then ?” asked Ward.

“He tried to follow out the directions the man had left. He had wanted the work, which he had only commenced, to be carried on, and he explained just what he wanted the boy to do.”

“Who was the boy?”

“The boy was myself,” said Mr. Crane; “and the man was?”

“The Man of Nazareth,” said Ward, almost in a whisper; “but, Mr. Crane, I never in all my life before thought of it in that way.”

“No, Hill, very likely not; I felt in that way too, when I was your age. He seemed to me like some one a great way off, and when I first found that he was in the Weston school, and just as much here as he was in Jerusalem almost nineteen hundred years ago, I felt as if I had just been introduced to him. It is the same as it is with your mother, Hill. You don’t see her face now, but you know she is, and that she loves you, and wants you to do your best.”

“I’ll try, Mr. Crane,” said Ward, rising and grasping the outstretched hand.

“That’s right. We’ll both of us try ‘to do those things that are pleasing in His sight.’ Come and see me again, Hill. Good-night!”

“Good-night, Mr. Crane,” and Ward Hill left East Hall, and stood silent for a moment in the starlight.

CHAPTER XVII

MOUNTAIN DAY

WARD did not mention his interview with Mr. Crane to Henry when he returned to his room ; but the determined way in which he took up his work at once convinced his roommate that a new impulse had seized him. He said nothing, however, for a time, and it would have been far better if he had remained silent, for Ward was somewhat overwrought already by the conversation with Mr. Crane. Conscience and pride, good resolutions and indifference, admiration of Mr. Crane and the thought of what Jack and Tim would think if he should give way to the new impulses, were all struggling for the mastery now. And Ward Hill's life for the time was hanging in the balance.

Henry, who had no thought but to encourage his chum, knew nothing of the struggle which was going on, and although he was doubtless governed by the best of purposes, unfortunately said the wrong word for the time.

“ I'm mighty glad to see you take hold again, Ward.”

“ Are you ? ” replied Ward, without looking up from his book. The condemnation of his own conscience was enough, he thought, without having his chum take the high and mighty way with him. Who was he,

anyway, that he too should reach out and pat him on the head, as he would a dog which had been taught to bring back a stick thrown into a pond?

“Yes,” said Henry, all unconscious of Ward’s feeling. “I’ve been so anxious that you should do well on father’s account, as well as your own. I didn’t want him put to shame by our poor work.”

“Oh, you didn’t?” said Ward thoroughly angry. “Well, let me tell you that it’s all his fault, anyway. What did he know about teaching, I’d like to know? I’d as soon have my great-grandmother, as to have him. Just look at it, will you? He said we could wait till the middle of the fourth year if we wanted to, and then enter—so excellent was his wonderful knowledge and ability as a teacher; and here we are having all we can do to keep up with the third-year boys. Fine teacher he is, I must say! I feel as if he ought to apologize to us, instead of our trying to honor him.”

There was a bright red spot on the cheeks of each of the boys now, but Henry made no reply. He saw his mistake in speaking as he had done to Ward, and Ward in turn was ashamed of what he had said about Dr. Boyd, whom in his heart he loved and respected as he did few men; but they were both too proud to acknowledge their faults, and the gulf between them was widened.

For a few days Ward did better in his Latin, but Mr. Crane was too wise to say anything to him after the recitation, and the thoughts of the boys were all taken up with the expedition of the next Wednesday, which was to be the long-looked-for Mountain Day.

There were no study hours the evening before, and as the weather promised to be all that could be desired, preparations were at once made to start for the Hump, and spend the night on its summit.

Luncheons were prepared by the matron of the dining hall and by the women presiding over the various places where the boys took their meals, and at about two o'clock in the afternoon the group of which Ward was to be a member was ready to start.

He and Jack had planned to go together, and at Jack's very earnest request Pond had been invited to go with them. Somehow both boys had conceived a very strong regard for Pond, his quiet manners, his earnest spirit, and manly ways all combining to impress these two impulsive classmates of his, in the most favorable way.

"Tim's decided to go with us too," said Jack, as he and his roommate came over to West Hall for Ward and Pond.

"All right," said Ward; "glad to have him." And yet deep down in his heart he knew he was not telling the truth. He had really intended to do better, and yet the presence and influence of Tim was that of which Ward was most afraid. There was something in his manner and bearing of which he was afraid, although he did not like to acknowledge this even to himself; and the easy way in which Tim laughed at everything and everybody not of his way of thinking, made Ward somewhat afraid to assert himself.

Pond said nothing as the boys approached, although he greeted each in his quiet, pleasant way; but he

noticed the blankets they had strapped and swung over their shoulders. They certainly were well equipped for the journey.

“What’s that you’ve got there?” said Tim, pointing to a strange-looking bundle Pond had arranged.

“That?” replied Pond. “Oh, that’s my bed quilt. Isn’t it a funny one? It’s one my grandmother made for me when she heard I was coming up to Weston. It doesn’t look much like that blanket of yours, Tim; but it’ll keep me as warm.”

“I thought you were taking it along for protection, to scare away ghosts or bears,” said Tim with a laugh, who was all unconscious of the poverty of Pond. He himself had never been accustomed to anything but the best, and so failed to appreciate the lacks of others.

But Pond only laughed good-naturedly as he said: “If you think it’ll work in that way I’ll trade with you, Tim. It’s all I’ve got, but it’ll keep me warm, and your blanket won’t do more than that for you, and I’ll have just as good a time as you will.”

The entire frankness of Pond was marvelous to Ward, who was somewhat ashamed of the bundle he had to carry, and had been inclined to apologize for it; but Pond’s example reassured him, and he said nothing.

“Hello, here’s Big Smith,” said Jack. “Are you going up the Hump?”

“Yes,” replied Big Smith; “I guess I’ll go along with you fellows. You know the way.”

Ward scowled, for this addition to their party was not pleasing to him; but Tim, winking meaningly at Jack, said: “Good for you, Big Smith. We’ll have to keep

straight if you're near by. It'll be a kind of missionary trip for you."

"That's what I thought," answered Big Smith, unconscious of the banter in Tim's words. "I suppose I can help you. That's the reason I chose to come with this company."

"Mighty kind of you," and Jack winked at Tim. "Where's your bundle?"

"Oh, I thought I wouldn't bring any. Some one'll help me out if I need it, I guess."

"All right, let's start then, fellows," said Jack, and the five boys together left the building, and soon were tramping along the road which led to the base of the mountain.

It was a perfect October day. The sides of the mountains were almost a blaze of glory in the many-colored tints of the autumn foliage. The shocks of corn still stood in many of the fields by which they passed, and in some of the orchards there were boys and girls gathering the dark-colored apples from the trees. There was such an air of comfort and of plenty about the homes of many of the farmers, that poverty and want seemed to be something which could not enter there.

Groups of boys could be seen climbing the hills in advance of them, or far below in the valleys they had passed. Ned Butler and Henry were left behind by our party, which was walking far more rapidly than they, and the first cloud of the day came to Ward as he noted how happy they seemed to be in each other's company.

“We’ll catch up with you long before you reach the summit of the Hump,” said Ned, as Ward passed them. “You’ll soon find you can’t keep up that gait when you begin to climb. I’ve been there before.”

“Pshaw! We’ll have to wait supper for you,” replied Jack. “Don’t you want us to give you a lift now? You look tired out.”

“Here is the place I was telling you about,” said Tim, as he leaped over the low fence by the roadside, and began to shake the pears from a tree in a yard.

“Oh, hold on, Tim,” said Ned. “Don’t be so free till you’re invited. Can we buy a few of these pears?” he added, as he saw the farmer standing in the doorway observing them.

“Help yourselves, boys,” replied the farmer. “We’ve had all the seckels we want. Jest pitch in and help yourselves. Only leave the tree, that’s all I ask,” he added laughingly.

The boys needed no second invitation, and soon filled their pockets, and thanking the kind-hearted farmer, who seemed to enjoy the sport, resumed their journey, although Ned and Henry soon dropped behind.

“They don’t care for our company, I judge,” said Tim, with a sneer. “We’ll manage to survive the loss though, I think. Come on, fellows, we’ll have to forge ahead, or we won’t get up the Hump in time to see the sun rise, to say nothing of its setting.”

“I don’t know, but I ought to go back with them,” said Big Smith soberly. “They may be talking of some things that will profit me more than what I get here.”

"Don't you believe it," said Jack. "Do you like these pears, Big Smith?"

"Yes," said Big Smith, "I do. They don't grow around where I live. As he gave them to us I thought I'd lay in a good supply."

"Good for you, Smith. I noticed that you took a few," and Jack slapped his companion's pockets, all of which bulged out with the load they were carrying.

In an hour they had arrived at the base of the mountain, and could catch glimpses of the summit of the Hump which rose far above them. Clouds seemed to lie between them and the point they were bound for, and Jack, turning to Big Smith and striving to imitate his deepest tones, said: "My friend, I hope you are prepared to take this trip. You'll be far above the earth ere long. In fact, you'll soon be above the clouds of earth, and as you are not encumbered with many earthly belongings, I trust you have well pondered the pathway you are about to enter."

"I should feel better if I had brought something to eat," replied Big Smith soberly. "I told my brother George to go down to the dining hall and lay in a good supply of provisions, but as he was going with another party I'm not sure that he did. And I begin to feel the cravings of hunger even now."

"Oh, you'll have something to eat before to-morrow night," said Tim. "You'll have a chance for a fine diet. You've brought enough of it along with you to satisfy us all."

"I've brought nothing," said Big Smith, looking at Jack. "What does he mean?"

“Oh, I guess he means you’ll eat your words,” replied Jack. “You’ve heard of that, haven’t you?”

“Yes; but how can I eat words. They won’t satisfy my hunger, which I begin to feel already.”

The boys laughed and turned to follow Tim, who had found a great chestnut tree on the mountain side. The burrs had been opened by the frosts, and the nuts lay thick upon the ground. For a few minutes they were busy picking them up, and then Jack and Ward climbed the tree to shake down some that might still be clinging to the branches. They worked hard, but Big Smith worked harder, and gathered the most of those that fell, so that when the boys returned to the ground there were few left for them.

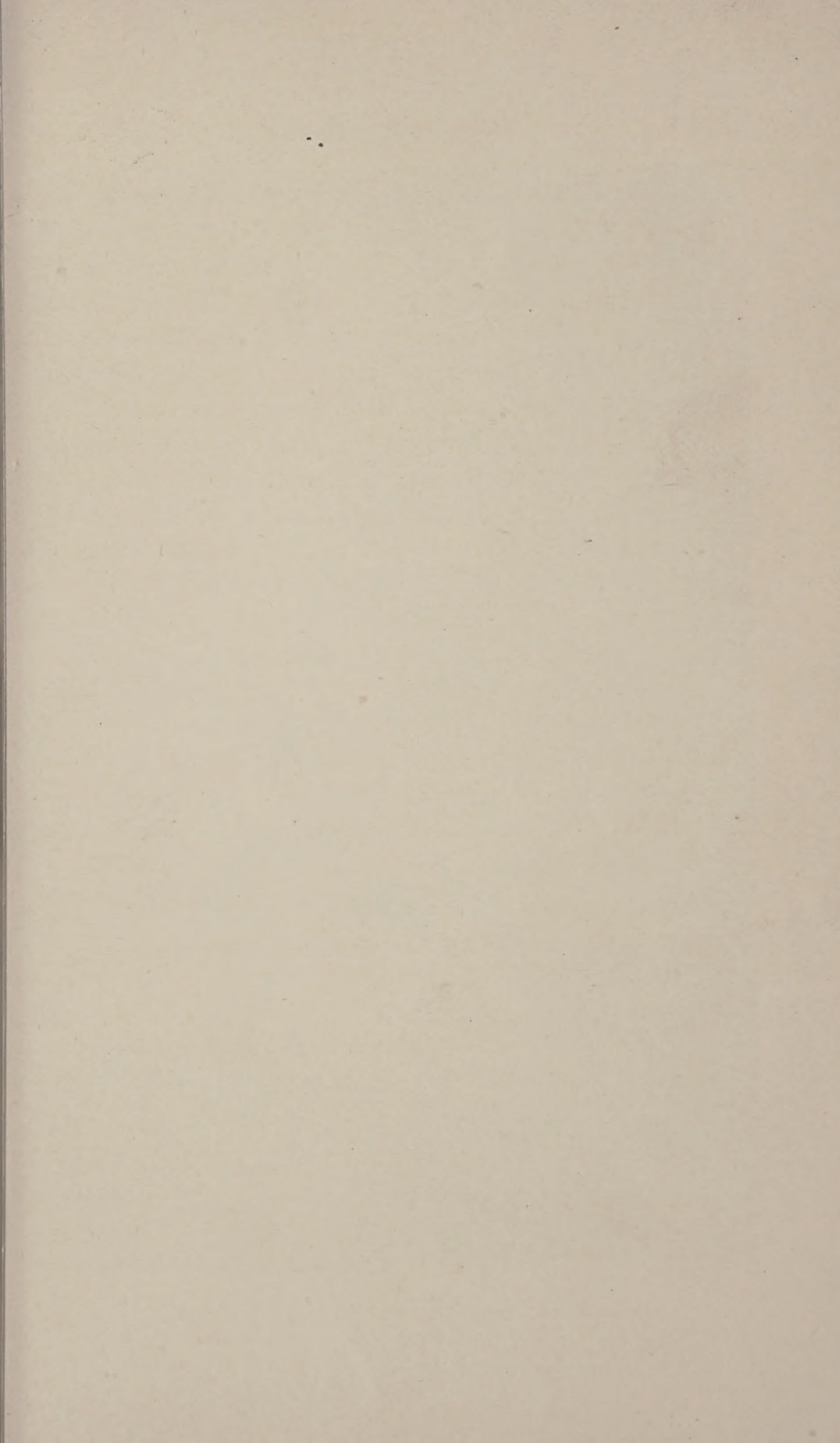
“Here, Big Smith, divide!” said Ward.

“Divide what?” replied Big Smith. “I only have these I picked up. Surely you cannot mean that you want any of these.”

“No, of course not,” said Jack. “We didn’t mean those that we shook down. That would be too unkind altogether. We only wanted you to let us help you carry them for you up the mountain. We didn’t know but you might be tired, the load is so heavy.”

“No,” replied Big Smith. “I think I can carry them. They’re not very heavy.”

And all unconscious of the meaning of Jack’s words, he joined them as they once more began the ascent. For a part of the way there was a rough road which led up the mountain side, and which was used by the lumbermen in the winter, but this soon grew less distinct, and





"Soon they made frequent stops to rest."

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the pathway became narrow and hard. Rough stones were in it that rolled beneath the feet of the boys. Soon they were flushed and panting, and made frequent stops to rest.

Other parties of boys were seen as they looked behind them, and as they climbed higher and higher the vision of the land beneath them became wider and wider. Hills which they had considered high began to look like ant-hills now. Once the path led around the edge of a precipice, and looking down they could see a farmhouse in the sheltered valley below.

"I'm going to wait for the other fellows," said Big Smith at last, seating himself on a boulder. "I must rest. I'm not strong enough to go on now."

None of the boys made any reply, as they resumed their climbing. Their faces were flushed, and were wet with perspiration ; but the summit was not far away now, and eagerly they pushed on. Stumbling often, and sometimes falling, they kept steadily at their work. There was no resting now. Up and up they went, steeper and steeper grew the pathway, and after another hour had passed, a shout from Jack showed them that at last they had arrived at their journey's end.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NIGHT ON THE SUMMIT

THE weary boys turned to look about them as soon as they gained the summit of the Hump. A long flat tableland extended for some distance about them, and at first they could hardly realize that they were standing on the top of the mountain which they had so often noticed in the valley below them. There, it had appeared to stand almost alone, so much higher did its summit reach than any of the adjacent hills, while their present view appeared to make it one among several of the higher peaks.

One look away in the distance, however, soon called back their thoughts, and they at once realized that they were standing on the highest point of land in all that region. As far as the eye could see, were peaks which dotted the earth like ant-hills. Between them lay the valleys, and the streams of water flashed like silver ribbons in the late afternoon of that October day as they wound down the hillsides and made their way onward to the great river beyond.

Little clusters of houses could be seen here and there, and Ward knew that they must be villages, although they looked like the toy houses with which he had played when he was a child.

Far on the right a little cloud of smoke indicated

what they recognized as a tiny train of cars, but it seemed to be hardly moving, although doubtless it was rushing onward with a speed of thirty or forty miles an hour. Here and there below them, along the sides of the Hump, were fast-flying patches of fog, and Ward's heart bounded as he thought that they must be clouds, and that they were standing above them. Above the clouds! It was his first experience of the kind, and with renewed interest he watched the swift moving shadows on the valley directly beneath them, and realized that they must be cast by the very clouds above which he was standing.

None of the boys spoke for a time, all being alike impressed by the grandeur of the view, and standing with an expression upon their faces that reflected the feelings of all. Pond was the first to break the silence as he said: "When I see those ridges of hills and the stretch of the valleys it makes me think of what some one said, when he declared that 'the plowshare of the Almighty must have been run through all this land.'"

"You make me think of what one of the fellows who graduated last year said," replied Jack. "He declared that he never climbed to the top of the Hump without feeling when he first looked down that he ought to say his prayers."

"I don't wonder," said Ward, "that they say all the great men are born or live a part of their lives among the mountains. Don't they say that the Swiss soldiers used to die of homesickness when they were taken away from the mountains?"

"I believe so," said Tim; "but I'll tell you what,

fellows, if we don't pre-empt one of these huts pretty quick, some one else will, and we'll be left out in the cold, cold world. Here come a lot of the others, and possession is nine points of the law, you know, and they say the other one isn't worth fighting about. Come on, fellows."

The spell was broken, and the boys turned quickly to follow Tim into one of the three little huts that stood in the center of the plateau. These huts had been erected by some of the lumbermen who were accustomed to work there in the winter time. They stood about a blackened spot which showed very plainly where they had built their fires, and in a moment the boys had selected the best, and had taken full possession.

Then they turned to watch the boys, whom they could see in places struggling up the rough pathway in parties of three or four. The first to arrive were greeted with a shout of welcome, and soon others came panting up to the summit, and joined their fellows. The other two huts were quickly taken possession of by the new arrivals, and those who came later were compelled to make their arrangements for passing the night as best they could. It was not long before there were fifty in the group of laughing boys, and all who had planned to come had gained the summit of the Hump.

"I say, fellows," said Tim, when the last party had arrived, "I'm as hungry as a bear. I think the first thing we want to do is to have some supper. Why don't we have a combination supper and each fellow turn in his possessions for the common good? It'll be more fun to do that than for each one to go by himself."

The boys all laughingly agreed to Tim's proposal, and soon the provisions were deposited near the great stones where the fire was to be made. Some of the boys who had made the journey before, and who knew what would be needed, had brought a supply of coffee, and there was also milk which others had purchased in the valley below.

Several of the boys were designated as those who should look after the fire, and others started with hatchets they had brought to provide fuel for the fire, while others were at once dispatched to cut and collect quantities of the hemlock boughs which were to provide the beds for the night.

In this last company Ward, Pond, and Big Smith found themselves together, and as they worked we may be sure that their tongues also were not idle.

"Ward," said Pond, "I want to speak to you."

"Say on, my friend; don't be bashful," replied Ward, as he cut an extra large branch with his knife.

"It's about Jack. Do you know, he's a splendid fellow?"

"I ought to. I've seen some good things about him. He's not a sneak, either."

"No, that's so; but that isn't what I mean. I was talking with him the other day, and I happened to say I thought I'd have to stay out of school this spring and try to earn some money so that I could come back next year. I didn't think much about it at the time; but what do you think the fellow did?"

"I can't imagine," replied Ward. "Perhaps he wept on your shoulder at the thought of parting."

“Not a bit of it. He wrote home to his father and told him all about me. He said he wrote that he didn’t see why, when his father was taking stock in all sorts of things, he shouldn’t take or let Jack take a little stock in me. He said he didn’t ever expect to be a preacher, or of much use in the world, anyway, so he’d like to invest a little in one whom he was kind enough to say he thought would try, anyhow.”

“What did his father say?” inquired Ward, looking up quickly.

“He sent him a check for one hundred dollars, and Jack gave it to me.” There was a tremor in Pond’s voice as he spoke, and Ward thought his eyes were filled with tears.

“Good for Jack! You’re going to keep it, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” said Pond quietly. “Do you know, I never had any of that feeling about taking from those who have been more fortunate than I. When I think of my mother, and what she’s trying to do for me, I don’t hesitate a minute. Of course some day I want to pay it back, and I’m going to try to do my best; but wasn’t it good of Jack?”

“It was that,” said Ward; “and you’ll be here now to play on the nine in the spring too.”

Pond laughed, and the boys started to return with their arms laden with the fragrant boughs; that is, all but Big Smith, who had been silent, listening with such evident interest to what Pond was telling that he had forgotten his errand.

There was a roaring fire at the camp when they re-

turned, and as the other boys soon came back with their contributions of fuel for the fire, or branches for the beds, the supper was soon ready to be served.

There were but few dishes to be found, and the cups had to be served by being passed from hand to hand.

“Whew! what’s the matter with this coffee?” said Ned Butler, as he took the cup offered him. “It’s got great strings of something in it. Looks like leather.”

“Tim, you boiled the milk in the coffee didn’t you?” and Jack laughed as he asked the question.

“Yes,” replied Tim. “Isn’t that the way to do it?”

A loud laugh from all greeted Tim’s confession. The coffee was spoiled, but the keen appetites of the boys did ample justice to all the other food. They laughed, and sang, and cracked their jokes, and Ward, who was thoroughly enjoying himself, thought that never before in all his life had he had so good a time.

“There goes the sun, fellows,” exclaimed Ned, suddenly leaping to his feet. “Now’s your chance to see the sunset from the top of the Hump.”

The boys all turned to watch the great red globe as it slowly sank behind the western hills. Long shafts of light were cast upon the hillsides, and seemed to deepen the effects of the gloom which already had come over the valleys. There were gorgeous colors and softened tints, and they could see the sun itself as it slowly dropped from sight. The blaze of glory suddenly disappeared, and then they knew the night was almost upon them.

"We haven't half enough hemlock boughs for bedding," said Tim quickly. "You'll have to hurry, fellows, or sleep on the ground."

There was a scattering at once and soon the boys came hurrying back with their arms again laden with boughs, and the beds were soon arranged.

"Who's going to wash the dishes?" said Ned. "That work hasn't been done yet."

"Oh, bother the dishes. What's the use of washing them? I never could see why people are so eager to wash such things for. They were clean enough when we quit eating, and I guess they'll be clean enough to begin with to-morrow morning, especially when we haven't much left for breakfast anyhow," said Jack.

"That's the way with Big Smith," said Tim with a laugh. "He says he doesn't believe it pays to wash your hands, they get dirty again so soon if you do."

"When did I say that?" said Big Smith quickly, not appreciating the banter of his companions. "I never said that to my recollection."

A laugh greeted his words, but several of the boys at once began the task of washing the dishes, while the others lay, or sat, grouped about the great fire. They roasted the chestnuts they had gathered, told stories, made jokes at one another's expense, and when at last it was decided that the time had come for them to "turn in," Ward could scarcely believe that the evening had passed.

As he entered the hut in which he was to pass the night, Tim was there, and drawing a bottle from his pocket, he offered to share it with Ward.

"No," said Ward quickly, "I promised my mother I wouldn't touch the stuff."

"All right, sonny," replied Tim; "always mind your mammy. I've given up the apron strings long ago. Your mother doesn't know much about life. I'm going to learn though," and he again turned the bottle up, and drank from it.

It was the first time Ward had seen any drinking in the school, and he felt shocked and disgusted. He had never liked Tim, and had been unconsciously drawn to him more by his good-natured and condescending ways than by anything else. He had no time to say anything more however, as the other members of the party who were to pass the night in the hut here entered, Big Smith along with them.

"I didn't bring any blanket," said Big Smith ruefully, "and it's cold. I'm afraid I'll be sick and ruin my voice. Boys, what shall I do?"

"I'll share with you," said Pond quickly.

"You can't wrap yourself up in your bedquilt, if you do," growled Tim; "I'd let him go it alone. He'll know better the next time. It's the only way to teach some fellows."

"Oh, I'll throw it over both of us. I guess that will do. I don't want Big Smith to ruin his voice. What would the fellows in West Hall do then, poor things?"

Big Smith at once selected the best place on the bed of boughs and took the quilt, which he quickly spread over him. There was not much left for Pond, but he good-naturedly took his place beside his companion, and lay down for the night.

Ward and Jack stepped outside the hut for a last look at the camp. The boys were scattered about on the boughs, with their feet toward the huge fire which had been left blazing, and which cast its shadows in fantastic forms over them. The wind was strong, but the night was clear and starlight, and there would not be much difficulty in keeping warm. It was a weird, strange sight, and wholly new in Ward's experience.

"There won't be much sleeping to-night, Ward," said Jack, as they turned again into the hut.

"Why not?"

"Oh, you'll have to wait and see." And Ward soon "saw." No sooner had quiet settled over the camp, than some disturbance would arise. Some one would arise and throw fresh wood upon the fire, or begin a song which others would take up. Again and again the Weston school cheer was given, and the echoes among the hills were awakened.

Tim Pickard was among the noisiest of them all, and Ward again and again looked keenly at him, thinking that he understood something of the cause of his hilarity. Big Smith grumbled loudly at the constant disturbance, but was mollified somewhat when at last the boys dragged him out, and compelled him to make a speech. His words were received with loud applause, and beaming benignantly upon all, he again sought his bed on the boughs, this time appropriating all of Pond's quaint bedquilt to himself.

Long before sunrise the boys were running about the camp, and waiting for the sun to appear. At last the gray of the dawn came in the east, and soon an increas-

ing glow was in the sky. Then hill after hill began to take form, and at last with a sudden burst the sun came up from behind the crest of the eastern ridge, and the whole scene was transfigured by his glory.

"That pays for the tramp," said Ned Butler. "What a sight! You've lost it, Big Smith."

"Lost what?" said Big Smith, rubbing his eyes sleepily, and coming out of his hut.

"The sunrise. It's the most glorious one I ever saw," replied Ned.

"Oh, it isn't much of a loss, just to see the sun. I've seen it rise lots of times. I'm afraid I've caught cold. I didn't sleep very warm last night."

"Stir around then, and help get breakfast," interrupted Jack, who was busily engaged in that occupation himself. "You'll soon warm up then."

"I can't cook," replied Big Smith turning away. "I wasn't made for such work."

But the breakfast was soon ready, and then he showed no lack of ability to do his part. That was a "duty" from which he never drew back.

Soon after breakfast the most of the boys prepared to return to the school. There was not sufficient provision for dinner, and so in groups, as they had come, they began the descent of the mountain. Some stopped occasionally to gather chestnuts, but the most of them were so stiff and sore from the exertions of the previous day, they had no disposition to delay.

"Tim," said Jack, "why didn't you fix Big Smith, as you agreed to?" The two boys were walking apart now, and their words could not be overheard.

“I’ve changed my plan,” said Tim in a low voice. “I’ve got something better,” and he explained his new project to his companion, who listened intently a moment, and then with a loud laugh turned back, and rejoined his companions.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FALL

WARD took but little part in the conversation of the boys, as they followed the rough path down the mountain side. He was troubled by that which he had seen Tim Pickard do the night before, and he watched him now with a feeling of disgust, and yet of strange interest too.

Tim was unusually boisterous, and as they walked on, Ward noticed that his eyes were unnaturally bright, and that he was more than commonly rough in his manners.

He pushed his companions about, and laughed aloud when they lost their balance, or when they fell. He shouted and sang and waked the echoes among the hills, and certainly was not acting like himself.

Ward thought he was the only one in the party who was suspicious of Tim, although he noticed frequently that Ned Butler glanced curiously at him, and was closely observing the movements of his noisy companion. They had gone far enough down the side of the mountain now to enable them to see the road which led through the valley, and only a little way before them was the steep declivity, along the edge of which their pathway ran. This was not a sheer precipice, but only a very steep descent, so steep that if one were to attempt

to go down it, he doubtless would fall and roll to the valley which lay nearly two hundred feet below them.

Ward could see far down now, and the pathway led around in the form of a half circle, and only a few feet from the edge. The people who lived in the red farmhouse below were moving about in the yard, and stopped and glanced upward as they discovered the boys moving along the rough pathway which was seldom used except in winter.

“Come on, fellows!” suddenly shouted Tim. “Let’s have a race around the horseshoe,” for that was the name by which the winding path was known. There was a sharp descent even in the path itself, and as it was so near the edge, great caution was needed by any one going down that he did not stumble and fall; and as for running, no one of sound mind would have dreamed of that.

Without waiting for a response, Tim darted suddenly ahead, and began to run swiftly down the path, shouting and waving his arms as he ran on. Ned looked quickly at Ward a moment, and then both boys started swiftly after him, the others at once following them.

On and on ran the boisterous Tim, his companions doing their utmost to keep up with him, and every moment expecting to see him stumble and fall. Giving no heed to their warning calls, Tim still ran swiftly on, and had turned the bend, and now was nearly opposite to them on the farther side of the mountain. Perhaps he would pass the place of danger all right, thought Ward; but neither he nor Ned, who were running in advance of the others, relaxed his effort to overtake

him. Tim was still running on, as if he was trying to show what he could do. Calls and warnings were all unheeded by him and it seemed as if his speed was increasing each moment.

“Did you ever see a fellow run like that?” said Ned. “He can distance every fellow in the school.”

“He’s crazy, or——” but Ward did not complete the sentence, for just then Tim turned toward them, and without stopping, shouted: “Come on, fellows. What are you waiting for? If you’ll catch me, I’ll carry you down the mountain on my back; come on!”

He waved his arms at them again, and then as he looked backward suddenly stumbled and fell to the ground. Unable to regain his footing, he rolled over and over, moving swiftly toward the edge of the pathway, and directly toward the steep side of the mountain, steeper there than in any other part of the way down to the valley below them.

All of his companions stopped running, and scarcely breathing were watching the unfortunate boy. Not a word was spoken, but with straining eyes they followed his swift movements as he desperately strove to stop himself by clutching at the stones, and digging the heels of his shoes into the ground.

It was the most terrible moment in all of Ward’s life. He felt that he must leap across the gulf between them and seize the falling boy before he came to the edge. He tried to cry out, but could not make a sound. Almost fascinated by the horror of the sight before him, and unable to turn his head aside so that he would not see what was surely about to happen, he

watched every motion of the helpless boy, who was now within a few feet of the edge, and it did not look as if any power on earth could check him.

"Oh, there he goes," groaned Ned, as a moment later Tim's rolling body shot several feet out over the edge and began to fall through the air, now unchecked by rolling stones or any other obstacle.

Ward could scarcely breathe. It seemed to him an hour, but in reality it was only a few seconds before Tim struck heavily upon the sloping mountain side, and began to roll on again. Sometimes head foremost, sometimes with his feet first, and then again turning and rolling in what seemed to be almost every direction at once, the swiftly-moving body plunged downward. On and on it went, until it struck a small projecting ledge on which a few huckleberry bushes were growing, and there it lodged, the feet however hanging out over the edge of the ledge, with nothing directly between them and the valley far below.

In a moment now the boys regained their self-possession and ran with all possible speed around the curving "horseshoe," until all four of them stood on the edge of the path peering down at their helpless companion, forty feet below them.

"Tim, are you hurt?" called Jack, who was lying on the ground and gazing down at his room-mate. But Tim made no reply. "Tim, can't you answer me?" called Jack again. There was a tremor in his voice, but still he received no reply. They could see Tim's white face looking up at them, but he was all unconscious of the words and presence of his frightened com-

panions. Ward had drawn back, for the sight had made him faint for the moment, but quickly regaining his self-control, he too peered down again at the helpless body below him.

“He’s fainted, or dead,” said Ned quickly. “If he should move six inches from where he is, he’ll fall, and nothing on earth can save him from going clear down to the valley. What shall we do?”

“Some one must go down there,” said Pond quietly; “and some one will have to run for a rope. If we get it in time, we can save him yet.”

“But no one can go down there till the rope comes,” said Ned. “It would be death if he should miss the ledge.”

“We mustn’t wait for the rope,” said Pond quietly. “If Tim moves, he’ll fall. We must manage somehow to hold him where he is, if we can.”

“I’ll go for the rope,” said Jack, and without waiting a moment he sped down the path, and quickly disappeared from sight.

“Big Smith, you’re the biggest and strongest of us all. You go down for him,” said Ned.

“I couldn’t think of it,” replied Big Smith quickly. “It makes me faint just to look down there now. It wouldn’t do for me to go. I might be hurt. I really can’t.”

“I’m going, fellows,” said Pond quietly, quickly throwing aside his coat. His face was pale, but there was an expression upon it such as Ward had never seen before on any face. Going to the edge, Pond very carefully estimated the distance and direction of the ledge,

and then, without hesitating a moment, upon his back and with his feet foremost, he let go his hold, and the swift descent was begun.

Breathless, the boys watched him as he began to slide, and tried to guide his course. His speed increased each moment, but he was moving directly toward the ledge. He held his head erect, and could slightly change his movements by the aid of his hands and arms, and as he slid on they could see that he was likely to gain the point for which he had started. It was the heroism of unselfishness, and the boys felt that Pond, in risking his life for Tim, was showing them something of which they had read but which they never before had seen.

A groan escaped them when they saw that although Pond had struck the ledge with his feet, the force and swiftness with which he was moving, as soon as he came against the rock, threw his body forward and almost as if he were diving, he was thrown headlong over the place.

But Pond was quick and strong, and when he darted swiftly ahead, he had reached out and grasped the bushes with his hands. They were strong enough to hold him, and clinging to them for a moment and with his body hanging over the ledge and nothing to prevent his falling straight to the valley below but his hold on the tough little bushes, he began slowly and carefully to draw himself up again, as he would have done on the parallel bars in the gymnasium. He soon threw one foot over the ledge, and then by one quick strong movement drew his body up also, and was safe on the ledge.

A shout went up from the boys above when they saw the success which had attended his efforts, a shout increased by other boys who had now joined them. Pond moved quickly to the place where Tim was lying, and drawing him farther back into a place of safety, at once began to examine him.

“He’s only fainted, fellows,” said he a moment later, and another shout went up from the crowd of watching boys above. “I think he’s broken an arm, though,” Pond added, a moment later; “I can’t tell yet; and he may be hurt in other ways, but he’s alive, and his heart is going all right. Now hurry up with your rope.”

But a full hour passed before Jack returned with a rope. He could scarcely breathe when he rejoined his fellows, and as he threw himself upon the ground, his eager companions seized the rope, while Ned made a strong slip noose in the end, and began to lower it to Pond.

All the boys were on the ground now, peering with breathless interest down at the boys below them. The rope came nearer and nearer, and finally rested directly before Pond, who tried to grasp it with his hands but failed. He could not quite reach it.

“Swing it, fellows, swing it a bit,” called Pond, and in a moment the rope had come within his eager but trembling grasp.

Pond then slipped the noose over Tim’s body and adjusted it carefully under his arms. After he had drawn it as tight as his strength permitted, he looked up and called: “Now, fellows! pull steadily and strong, and don’t let it slip an inch. Now then!”

Slowly the body of Tim moved up from the ledge, his head hanging to one side, and in spite of the efforts of the boys, sometimes striking roughly against the side of the mountain. When he was near the top, a half-dozen eager hands grasped him, and with one strong effort on the part of all, he was pulled over the edge, and Tim was safe.

Quickly the rope was lowered again for Pond, and once more it was seized by the waiting boy, and after looking carefully to the knot, he adjusted it beneath his own arms, and keeping a tight hold with his hands, he called out, "All ready, fellows."

The rope tightened and Pond felt himself lifted from the ledge and swung out over the edge ; with his feet he kept himself from striking against the rough sides of the mountain, and soon the forty feet between him and safety were passed, and Pond too was lifted over the edge and stood once more among his companions.

"Look out, fellows, he's fainted," said Ward quickly, as he saw Pond's face become deadly white and his body begin to sway.

They caught the falling boy in their arms and gently laid him upon the ground. They loosened his collar, and bathed his face with cool water from a spring near by, and in a few moments he opened his eyes and gazed in surprise about him. "I guess I fainted," he said with a smile, and then as the whole terrible experience came back he said quickly, "Where's Tim?"

"He's here ; he's all right, I guess," replied Ward ; "you saved him, Pond."

"Did I?" said Pond dreamily ; "I'm so glad——"

but he did not finish his sentence, for the over-tired boy again became unconscious.

“Now, fellows,” said Ned Butler quickly, “we’ve got to carry Pond and Tim down the mountain. When we once get into the valley, we’ll find some kind of a rig to take them over to Weston in, but we’ll have to carry them till we come to the road.”

At once the boys began to proffer their services, but Jack interposed and quietly said: “No, you can’t carry them in any such way as you are talking about. Unstrap your blankets and we’ll take one for Tim and one for Pond. Then three fellows take hold of each side of each blanket, and we’ll carry them both all right.”

“That’s the thing,” said Ned; “good for you Speck,” and in a moment Pond had been carefully placed on one of the blankets and Tim gently laid upon another, and then lifting them slowly from the ground the little procession began its way down the mountain side.

CHAPTER XX

IN EAST HALL

NOT half the journey to the valley had been finished, before both Pond and Tim opened their eyes and spoke to their helpers. Pond insisted at once upon being released from his position, a request to which his friends would not listen ; but Tim could only groan, and complain of the intense pain he was suffering in his arm. But the boys moved on slowly and carefully, striving to soothe the suffering lad, and in a half-hour arrived at the farmhouse which stood near the base of the mountain, and on the road which led back to Weston.

Here they arranged for a carriage which, although Jack declared it must have been “Noah’s family turn-out,” was nevertheless fairly comfortable, and at last brought them safely into the village. The two invalids were at once carried up to their rooms, and Dr. Gray and the village physician were speedily summoned.

Tim’s trouble was at once pronounced to be a fracture of the arm, and the doctor declared that he must go home immediately. Pond would be all right in a few days, and was to remain at Weston.

A crowd of boys assembled the next day to give Tim a worthy “send-off” when the coach left the village, and the pale-faced captain of the nine, leaning back in

his seat against the pillows carefully arranged by Jack, who was to be his companion on the journey to New York, where Tim's home was, smiled and looked happy, in spite of his suffering, at the manifest good-will of the students.

He had never been popular with his fellows, and his position as leader of a certain class of the boys was due entirely to his physical strength and the possession of money. All of these things were forgotten, however, in the excitement which his adventure had aroused, and the sympathy which had been called forth by his suffering.

As for Pond, for several days the school did not tire of singing his praises, and the modest boy was almost overwhelmed by the attentions he received. Dr. Gray proudly referred to his heroism before the assembly of the students in chapel. Mrs. Gray visited him in his room, and brought him some little delicacies; the teachers spoke of him to their classes and praised him when they met him, and the boys could talk of little else, until Pond laughingly declared that the next time he went down the side of the Hump after Tim, he did not believe he would come back at all, as his experiences in the school were harder to be endured than the adventure itself. But Pond was high in the regard of all the Weston boys, and although they soon ceased to talk of his deed, the position he had won in their respect and affection was not lost.

On the second day after the departure of Tim, Jack returned to Weston and reported that his room-mate was doing well, although his family declared that he

would not return to the school until after the Christmas holidays, a decision against which the patient did not rebel.

“Ward,” said Jack that evening when he was seated in Ward’s room, before the bell for the study hour was rung, “Tim’s going to be away two months now, and there’s something I want you to do for me. Tell me, will you do it?”

“Why, of course,” said Ward. “I haven’t the slightest idea what it is you want, but I’ll do it. Is it to go to Madagascar, or join the ‘Tangs’?”

“It’s neither, that is, just at present. I want you to come over and room with me till Tim comes back.”

“I’d like to,” replied Ward quickly; “but I don’t know as it would do,” he added slowly.

“Why not, I’d like to know? It’s a better room than this den ever thought of being.”

“You don’t have to say that,” said Ward, glancing about the room. “I know that already.”

“Well, why not come then? Here you’ll have to look after your own room, take care of your own fires, and all that sort of thing. Over in my room all that’s done for you. All you’ll have to do will be to eat, drink, and be merry, and to put up with your humble servant.”

“It’s Henry I’m thinking about,” replied Ward. “What will he say to it? I’ll have to come back here next term, you know.”

“Oh, he won’t care. I’ll take good care of him too. Come on, and we’ll go over and ask Dr. Gray about it before the bell rings. Come on, Ward; come on.”

As Ward was eager for the change, he allowed himself to be persuaded, and soon the boys were in Dr. Gray's study, and the desired permission had been obtained.

Ward thought the doctor hesitated about giving his consent to the change, and as he added some warning words about the danger of neglecting his work, and a few other things, he knew what was in his mind ; but, happy over the consent which had reluctantly been given, he gave little heed to his impressions, and both boys quickly returned to Ward's room.

Henry was there, and when Ward explained the project, he was somewhat irritated at the quick consent which Henry gave, although this was soon lost in his pleasure at the separation, though it was probably only to be temporary.

Just how the change in his feelings had come about, he could not explain even to himself. He was well aware of all the sterling qualities Henry possessed, and in many ways he thoroughly respected him ; but their relations had been more and more strained of late, and Ward like many another had laid the blame of it all to the charge of his friend.

Perhaps his own increasing carelessness, and the association with Tim and Jack and other boys of their kind, would have afforded a clew had he been willing to take it ; but unmindful of all these things, it was with a light heart that he transferred all his possessions on the following day to Jack's room in East Hall.

For a time he was thoroughly happy there. The richer furnishings of the room, the fact that all the

care of it was taken by the colored man whom many of the boys in East Hall employed, the constant good-nature of Jack, whom he came to like more and more, all seemed to fit in exactly with his desires, and he was more than content in his new surroundings.

For a time he worked faithfully at his lessons, and regained his standing in the class, but it was only for a time. The easy-going ways of his new room-mate and the general tone of life among the East Hall boys soon began to assert themselves, and Ward's work once more began to slip back. He was having a "good time," and the better things were neglected, if indeed they were not forgotten.

Mr. Crane occasionally had spoken a few words of encouragement and several interviews had taken place in his room, but soon Ward began to avoid him. Perhaps his own conscience was not quiet, and he realized that he was disappointing the teacher whom he respected more than any other in the school ; but as he more and more neglected his work, he was at greater pains to avoid a meeting with Mr. Crane. Sometimes he thought he could detect a feeling of great disappointment in Mr. Crane's manner, but as he did not venture to say much to him now, he was more than content to have him keep away.

Ward began to rebel more and more against the fact that he was compelled to take his meals at the dining hall. He was saluted by warning cries to "beware of the veal" whenever he started toward the "hash house" and left his more fortunate companions who boarded at "Ma" Perrins' or at some other of the so-

called better places. He was cramped for money too. The East Hall boys seemed to him to have an abundance, and once or twice he ventured to send home for more ; and when the reply came that they were doing all in their power for him now, he would feel ashamed for a time, knowing full well all the sacrifice his family were making for him. But this feeling did not last long. Gradually Ward was becoming more reckless, more careless, and more dissatisfied with himself and with his lot in life. He did not realize that he was taking the surest course to remain in it instead of fitting himself to rise out of and above it.

He was still popular with the boys, and his friends increased in number and in their regard for him ; but they were not the boys whom deep down in his heart he most respected and whose good opinion he most desired. Ned Butler and Henry had become closer and warmer friends, but they now were seldom in Jack's room.

Pond, who had special reasons for liking Jack, was a frequent caller, and none of the boys seemed to care or think for a moment of his lack of money. He never made any apologies, and never complained ; but no one in all the school was better liked, and Ward knew there was no one who was more deeply respected.

The cold weather soon came and the outdoor sports ceased. It was the portion of the year when the hardest and best work could be done, and many were working hard ; but the growing carelessness of Ward was not checked, and his course still was steadily downward.

In Mr. Blake's classes he had come to use all the

methods which certain of the boys employed to avoid work. He was doing things now which he would have regarded as dishonest when he first came to Weston, and doing them too as a matter of course. Indeed he often boasted of his success, and felt a certain kind of pride in the fact that many of the East Hall boys daily sought his aid, Jack Hobart indeed almost relying upon him.

One evening before study hour, after Ward had been rooming with Jack about a month, in response to the summons to "Come in, what are you standing out there for?" which had followed a loud rap upon the door, in walked Big Smith.

"Hello, Big Smith. Take a chair. You're quite a stranger. Glad to see you. How are you?"

"I am well," replied their visitor in his most solemn tones; "that is, I am well physically, but I am troubled in soul. Last night I couldn't sleep much. Don't I look worn and weary?"

"I hadn't noticed it," said Jack with a laugh. "How's his appetite, Ward? Can he store away the veal, or has he eschewed all that sort of thing?"

"No, I feed upon it still," said Big Smith; "but, Speck, I felt moved to come and see you. I did indeed. I have felt so often, and now I've come. I feel it to be my duty."

"Speak up. Don't be afraid. Take the load off your mind, my poor dying friend. What is it?"

"I have noticed," continued Big Smith solemnly, "your great generosity. I heard of the gift you made to Pond. I say nothing against him."

“You’d better not here,” responded Jack. “Pond’s the fellow we swear by, isn’t he, Ward?”

Ward nodded his head, but said nothing, and Big Smith continued: “Yes, I noted your kindness to Pond, and then I saw how you took Ward in, and are caring for him. I don’t know whether you are clothing him as well as giving him a room, but I have noted that you care for the unfortunate and the lowly. Now I have no great ambition myself. I receive aid too.”

Big Smith sat twirling his thumbs and gazing calmly up at the ceiling. Consequently he did not see the flush of anger and shame that came like a flash on Ward’s face, but Jack saw it, and full of sympathy for his friend, he said: “What is it you want, Big Smith? Do you want me to take up a collection for you? Is that it?”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” replied Big Smith, his eyes glistening; “doubtless for a worthy young man you might secure something from among the boys of East Hall. It would be thankfully accepted, I can assure you. Still, that was not what I had in mind. I didn’t know but you personally might feel inclined to aid me. When I think of my brilliant future, and how in my mind’s eye I already can see the multitudes hanging on my words, I am eager to get into the work at once. Unfortunately the men of the Board require me to remain here for a season. And if I remain I must eat, and if I eat I must pay for it, for I am honest, and if I remain to eat, and pay for what I eat, where am I to get the money? That is the problem of my life just now.”

Big Smith seemed to be swelling out with pride over his oratorical effort. Poor Ward could say nothing ; he sat still, his face showing a look of disgust strongly stamped upon it.

Jack laughed, for he heartily enjoyed the scene. “Of course you’ll have to eat, Big Smith. You never can get along without eating. May I recommend a diet?”

“Yes,” said the visitor, but his calm smile was gone ; “I didn’t—that is—yes—what do you mean?”

“Humble pie, did you ever try it.”

“Never,” said Big Smith rising quietly ; “I didn’t come here to be insulted. I was all sincere, and as you’d helped other fellows I didn’t know but you’d help me,” and he turned to leave the room.

“Hold on, Big Smith,” called Jack ; “I’ll see what I’ve got. Sit down a bit. I’ll see what I can do for you.” Big Smith sat down and Jack went quickly into his bedroom and returned with his purse in his hand. “I’ve got just exactly one dollar and fifty-nine cents here. That won’t do you much good, I fear.”

“It’ll help ! It’ll help !” said Big Smith, smiling once more benignantly.

“I’ll tell you what,” continued Jack ; “Sawyer owes me a dollar and Hoff owes me another ; you go over to your room and I’ll bring it right over.”

“All right,” said Big Smith ; “I shall be glad to see you in my room. I shall be expecting you,” he added as he left the room.

“Ward, I’ve the biggest thing I’m going to try on that fellow. It’s rich !” and Jack slapped his sides in high glee. “Don’t look so glum, Ward. Just listen while

I explain. Since Tim's been gone the school's been like a funeral. This is what I'm going to do," and as soon as Jack had explained his project to Ward, both boys left the room and ran swiftly toward West Hall.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CANNON BALL

WARD had followed Jack without fully understanding what his project was to be, but he had heard enough to make him eager to have a share in the plan, whatever it was ; and in a brief time they had made their way up the winding stairway of West Hall, and stood for a moment before the door of Big Smith's room.

How strange it all was, Ward thought, as he glanced about the hallway. The same rough floor and battered walls he had seen when he had first entered the school, there was the same air of age and hard usage manifest on every side, but how different it all seemed now in contrast with the richer furnishings of East Hall. And soon he would have to return to it. He wished Tim would not come back again. And yet he was conscious of a feeling of shame when he thought of Big Smith's words, and how he had classed him with others who had willingly taken of the aid which Jack in his easy-going generosity had scattered freely on any one who was willing to receive it. Was that the way in which the school regarded him? He rebelled at the thought, and yet was it not true after all? Was he not receiving from Jack that which he knew he could not repay?

These thoughts were passing swiftly through Ward's

mind while he and Jack stood waiting before Big Smith's door ; but he was not thinking of the greatest harm of all, and that was that he was being led on into evil ways by the easy-going habits of Jack, and that he could utter no protest because of the very position he held. Indeed to Jack, accustomed to take a light view of life, and without the careful home training which Ward had had from his earliest boyhood, these things were in a measure a matter of course, while to Ward they furnished greater danger, because they were ways into which he entered against the protests of his own conscience, and were not harmless ends, but only the beginnings of greater things.

Already, although he would not acknowledge it to himself, his conscience was not so sensitive as once it had been, and while he knew he was doing wrong, he tried to make himself indifferent to it all, and whenever he felt that he had done wrong, and remorse began to trouble him, he rushed on all the more recklessly because he was afraid to stop and think. Poor Ward ! He was not the same eager, happy, light-hearted lad who had run up those same steep stairways only a few weeks before.

To his relief the door was soon opened, and Little Smith bade them enter, although his face partially expressed his surprise at a visit from these East Hall boys. Little Smith, so called to distinguish him from his brother, still in many ways bore a striking resemblance to Big Smith. His features were like his brother's, and his voice was of the same heavy tone, although it had not yet settled to the depth of the elder boy's. Just

now it was in that stage which Thackeray has described as somewhere "between an unearthly treble and a preternatural bass," but he lived in hopes of developing, by the aid of reading hymns and frequent practice in the woods about Weston, a tone as deep as that which his brother possessed, and which was to him the ideal of the human voice divine.

"My brother isn't in," said Little Smith as soon as his visitors were seated. "I thought he had gone over to your room," and he looked at Jack questioningly as he spoke.

"Oh I knew he wasn't in," replied Jack; "he's been over to my room. In fact we just left him there. I came over to get the cannon ball. You keep it here, I think."

"Did he tell you it was in our room?" asked Little Smith in surprise.

"Oh yes—that is, we knew it was here. Trot it out, my dear, I want to see it," said Jack.

Thus bidden, Little Smith entered his bedroom and returned with the heavy ball in his hands. Jack took it eagerly and then said: "I expect this old fellow could tell some great stories if it could only speak. There's a tradition that it was used in the French and Indian wars, and later that it spoke its piece in the Revolution. I don't believe it ever knew it would come up to Weston to be educated. I tell you an educated cannon ball's a great thing."

Ward laughed and said: "How comes it then that it's left here to be knocked around?"

"Thereby hangs a tale," replied Jack. "It used

to be kept up in the museum, but somehow it found its way into one of the fellows' rooms, and then very soon it got into bad ways. It didn't seem to be satisfied to stay there, but every chance it got, it would scoot out, and then the first thing you knew it would be bumping and rolling down the stairs."

"How does it happen that it's in West Hall instead of being in East?"

"Oh, you'll have to ask Mr. Crane about that. Somehow he objects to having it there, and the fellows don't dare to fool with him very much. No, West Hall's the place for it."

"It's bothered Mr. Blake a good deal," said Little Smith soberly. "Some of the bad boys rolled it down the stairs in study hours. Of course Mr Blake had to get it and he kept it hidden in his room. But the same boys, at least I suppose they were the same, would get into his room and steal it out, and then the first thing Mr. Blake knew it would come thundering down the stairs again. Once or twice I thought the whole hall had fallen in."

"I shouldn't think you'd dare to be found with it in your room then," said Jack soberly.

"We shouldn't, only Mr. Blake asked my brother to keep it here and not let any one know we had it. I should think he'd better take it out and bury it. Then it wouldn't make any trouble."

"Oh, there's no use in that," laughed Jack; "that's been tried lots of times. Somehow it's always dug up and finds its way back. I believe they've shipped it out of town, given it to other schools, and even sent it

to the heathen, but it just can't tear itself away from Weston, and always shows up at the beginning of the school year. Some rash unbelievers have said, I understand, that it isn't always the same ball ; but that can't be," and Jack winked slowly at Ward as he spoke. "And now," he added, "after everything else has been tried and failed, it's been committed to the care of Big and Little Smith. It's perfectly safe here ; there's no doubt about that."

"I think that's so," replied Little Smith, "though I don't understand why my brother told you about it."

"That's all right," and Jack laughed ; "I came with a purpose. I'm just going to fix that ball this time. I'm going to make it warm for it, so to speak." and quickly lifting it, he tossed it into the stove, the door of which stood open.

"What did you do that for?" said Little Smith ; "my brother won't like it, I know."

"Oh, yes, he will ; make yourself easy about that. Little Smith, are you going to be the valedic of the class?" he added to turn the course of the conversation.

"I don't know. I hardly think so. My brother may be, but I don't believe I shall."

"That's very good of you to give way to him, I'm sure," replied Jack. "Don't you think he'll be back pretty soon."

"Yes, he may be coming now. I hear somebody in the hall," and Little Smith went out of the room to see who the new-comer was. Ward followed him and returned in a moment to say. "It's all right, Jack. It's

a good time. There's nobody in the way, and we'd better send it now. I'll help you."

Ward took the tongs and Jack the coal shovel, and by their combined efforts the ball was rolled out of the stove and fell upon the floor. It was intensely hot, but there was no glow upon it, and nothing to show that it had been near the fire. And yet it charred the floor of the room, for the Smiths had no carpet, and the boys, using the tongs and shovel as aids, quickly rolled it out into the hall to the stairway, and then with one sudden push sent it rolling down the steps.

There was no one in sight when they started it on its course, but as it went thundering on its way, gathering added force with each fall, its noise increased, and in a moment the startled students rushed from their rooms to see what the disturbance meant, and the halls almost seemed to be filled with boys.

On went the ball and at last came up sharply against the closed door on the first floor with a report that indicated that again the door had given way before the assault. Ward and Jack rushed down the hall on the first floor just as Mr. Blake came out of his room.

"Stand back there, boys!" called out the teacher. "I thought we had come to the end of this silly disturbance, but I shall have to take the ball again, I see."

Ward and Jack looked at each other meaningly, and then Mr. Blake, who was somewhat angry and very much in earnest, bent over to take the ball in his hands. He suddenly uttered a cry of pain and stepped quickly back just as Big Smith entered the hallway.

His exclamation was not understood by any of the boys except Ward and Jack, and as Big Smith came in and looked wonderingly at the assembly, he quickly spied the ball and advanced to take it again.

“Don’t touch it. Don’t touch it, Smith,” said Mr. Blake warningly.

“Why not? I’m not afraid,” and disregarding the teacher’s warning, Big Smith lifted the ball from the floor. In an instant he dropped it however, and began to dance about the hall, blowing upon his hands and screaming with the pain. “Oh my, oh my!” he shouted, “I’ve burned my hands! I’ve burned my hands! Oh my! Oh dear! What shall I do? What shall I do? I’ve burned myself. My hands are on fire!”

Big Smith stopped for a moment and gazed ruefully at his suffering hands. “Just look at ’em! Just look at ’em! Just see that, will you? Just look at ’em! Oh my! Oh dear!” and as he held them up before the boys, who now were laughing and joining in the confusion, they could see that great blisters had appeared on both palms. Mr. Blake had said nothing, but his face clearly showed that he too was suffering.

“It’s the meanest trick ever played in this school,” said one of the boys, sobered in a moment. “There’s nothing smart about it. It’s a shame and disgrace to the school!”

Others however were laughing at the plight of Big Smith and the teacher, and the confusion was increasing each moment. Little Smith had hurried down the stairs at the sounds his brother was making, and now

approaching him said, "What's the trouble? Oh, the poor boy!" he exclaimed a moment later as Big Smith held up his hands so that he could look upon the great blisters. It was a sight to stir the sympathies of any one with a grain of pity in his heart, and it was not long before almost all the boys were sympathizing with both Mr. Blake and Big Smith.

"How did it happen?" exclaimed Big Smith, looking ruefully again at the cannon ball which all now discreetly left in the place to which it had rolled.

"It's time for us to be going," whispered Ward to Jack. "We ought to be in East Hall right away."

"All right," whispered Jack in reply. "Just hold on a bit," and he boldly approached Big Smith, and in a voice of sympathy said, "Let me see, Big Smith."

The suffering boy held up his hands to Jack's view, and looking angrily at him said: "Oh, you feel dreadfully about it, don't you? Most as bad as I do, I guess."

"I'm sorry for you," replied Jack, slipping the bill into his hand which he had promised him a little time before in his room in East Hall. "If there's anything I can do for you call on me and let me know. Don't be afraid. I'll help you out if I can."

Big Smith made no reply, and Ward and Jack who were near the door quickly stepped out, glad of the opportunity of escaping, as both felt that the trick had gone farther than they had planned.

Quick as they were, however, they heard the voice of Little Smith as he shouted: "They're the boys who

did it, Mr. Blake. They heated the ball up in my room."

"In your room!" they heard Mr. Blake reply in surprise, but they did not wait to hear more, but rapidly walked over to East Hall, neither saying anything until they had entered their room, taken off their overcoats, and seated themselves at the table.

The bell for study hour had now been rung, and Jack arose to reply to the rap of Mr. Crane, who visited each room to see that all the boys were at work.

"Well, Ward, we're in for it this time," said Jack soberly, as he took his place again at the table.

"I suppose so," replied Ward gloomily. "It's that little sneak Little Smith who's done it."

"No, we're the ones who did it," said Jack. "Honest though, I'd no idea of peeling their hands as I did. My, but Big Smith did ki-yi, didn't he? He'll never need to take any more voice lessons. He can strike high C now, and not half try."

"I'm sorry we did it," said Ward thoughtfully, after a moment's silence.

"Sorry you did it, or sorry you got found out, Ward?" Jack laughed and Ward smiled at the words, for he realized their meaning in full. "Oh well, cheer up, old fellow. It isn't the first scrape I've been in, and no one's ever heard me whine about being caught either."

"It's the first one I've been in," replied Ward. "You'll have to acknowledge that."

"Oh no, it's the first one you've been found out in. There's a big difference let me tell you. But never

mind, Ward, it can't be helped now. No use in crying over it."

"I suppose not," replied Ward, feeling strangely like crying however.

What would Mr. Crane and Dr. Gray think of him now? And yet if he had known it, it was his pride more than his sense of right which was hurt, as Jack had hinted. Visions of being sent home in disgrace rose before him, and he could already see the grief of his father and mother as he came back to the old home.

"Come in," called Jack suddenly in response to a rap on the door. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he added, as Little Smith came in and held out a letter for Jack to take.

"That's for you," he said, and turned abruptly and left the room.

"Well, it's an invitation from the doctor," said Jack, trying to smile when he had read the letter. "He wants to see us at once, and upon the whole, Ward, I think we'd better accept his invitation."

CHAPTER XXII

THE LIMITS

IT was with heavy hearts that Ward and Jack left their room and started toward Dr. Gray's study. At least, Ward's heart was heavy, but Jack seemed somehow to command his feelings, and in a measure received the good and ill alike that came to him. Few ever knew how much his apparent indifference concealed, for his manner seldom changed. He was the same easy-going, light-hearted lad to all. His good nature was proverbial in the school, and he often boasted that no one had ever seen him angry, or "whine," as he himself expressed it.

Since Ward had been rooming with him, however, he had concluded that Jack was one who made it a point in his life not to give way, whatever his feelings were; if he did well or was fortunate, he never boasted; while if he fell into trouble, he did not complain.

Ward looked at him curiously as they stood for a moment in the light before the door of the doctor's study waiting for the response to their ringing of the door bell. For his part he was afraid, and he made no effort to conceal his fear, although he thought of the words of Jack when he had declared that it was not what he had done, but the discovery of it by the teachers which most troubled him.

He breathed heavily as he turned and glanced toward the academy. The lights in the many-windowed buildings seemed to keep company with the stars which were peacefully shining overhead. The outlines of the mountains were clearly defined, and the patches of snow which now could be seen in many places upon their sides, gave them a strangely cold and ghostly appearance. There was no sympathy to be found there, and somehow he had the feeling too, that among the boys there was little help to be expected. They would all, or nearly all, feel that rolling a hot cannon ball down the stairs of West Hall was not the brightest thing in all the world. He could already see in his mind the look of anger or disgust which would appear upon Ned Butler's face when he heard of the scrape, and as for Henry, why——

His thoughts were recalled in an instant to the situation by the opening of the door by the servant, and the boys were at once admitted into the doctor's room. Jack seemed to be at ease and without any special dread of the interview, but Ward's heart was beating rapidly.

Dr. Gray quietly welcomed the boys, and motioned for them both to be seated. He at once began to speak of the trouble in West Hall, and they knew by the tones of his voice that he was deeply stirred and that he regarded the affair as no light one.

“Dr. Gray,” said Jack quickly, “let me tell you about it before you go on. We did roll the cannon ball down the stairs, and it was hot too, but we had no thought of burning the hands either of Mr. Blake or Big Smith. We didn't, honestly.”

As Dr. Gray made no reply Jack continued, speaking eagerly and rapidly, "And, doctor, Ward didn't have anything to do with it. I put the ball in the stove. Indeed I did, and Ward had nothing to do with it."

"Were you with him at the time, Hill?" asked the doctor interrupting Jack. "Did you know what was to be done? Did you help send it down the stairs? Did you go over to West Hall knowing what Hobart was about to do?"

"Yes, sir," said Ward quietly. "I was as much to blame as Speck, I mean Jack, I mean Hobart."

"It is as I thought," said the doctor quietly. "I am disappointed, bitterly disappointed in you both. It was such a senseless, cruel thing to do. I do not doubt that neither of you intended to do any great harm, but you have done it, whether you intended or not. I am disappointed, I say, in you both. We expect a certain class of boys to get into a certain kind of scrape at about the same time every year. I don't know why it is, but so it is. A new crop of lads comes up here every year. They may come from Maine or from California—it doesn't seem to matter much. Some of them do the same old things that have been done here since the school began. The tricks are not new, not one of them, and it doesn't take us long to know just the ones we must look after and just about what they will do and when they will do it. But I must say I had better thoughts of you. I did not expect you to be engaged in these silly, yes worse than silly—wicked deeds. How do you feel about it yourselves, boys?"

“ Well doctor, I don’t mind saying that I’m sorry Mr. Blake burned his hands. I am indeed,” said Jack quickly. “ We didn’t intend to hurt him, only to make a racket, that was all.”

“ That is, what you’re sorry for, as I understand you, Hobart, is not that you did the thing, but you’re sorry you were found out ! Is that it ? ”

Jack and Ward glanced quickly at each other as they heard the words they themselves had used not long before, now spoken by the principal himself. The quick look did not escape the doctor’s notice, but without apparently heeding it, he said: “ Well, boys, as you have been the transgressors, you’ll have to walk in the transgressors’ ways I fear. You will both of you be on the ‘ limits ’ for the next three weeks. I trust that it may be the beginning of better things for you both. Good-night,” and as he arose from his chair, the boys also arose and started toward the door. “ Good-night, doctor,” they both said quietly, and the door was closed behind them.

Ward knew from Dr. Gray’s manner that he was disappointed, grieved, and angry, and perhaps the knowledge in his own heart that he had given him occasion for all those feelings did not tend to soothe his own mind at the time. Neither of the boys spoke for a time as they walked slowly back to East Hall, for they both were busied with their own thoughts.

The “ limits ” was an expression peculiar to the Weston school. When that sentence had been pronounced upon any boy, it meant that during the period named he was not to be allowed to leave the school

grounds for any purpose or at any time ; nor was he to enter any building besides that in which he roomed, except for recitations and necessary purposes.

Furthermore, if within that period he was detected in any disturbance or disorder, suspension or expulsion would at once follow, the sentence depending somewhat upon the nature of the offense. It was a serious punishment and both boys knew what it meant.

“ Banished from West Hall and Big Smith’s room ! Banished from Blake’s company and presence ! Banished ! What’s banished but set free ? ” said Jack after they had returned to their room. He was striving to imitate Big Smith’s tones and to appear as if he were not cast down, but as Ward made no response, he soon took his books and apparently was busied in studying them.

Ward however could not study. It was his first open punishment, and he felt the disgrace keenly. All the boys would know it to-morrow, and he somehow felt that he would not receive much sympathy. Already he was being classed with Tim and the East Hall boys, and his standing in the school had fallen rapidly. Mr. Crane, although he was still kind and attentive, showed very plainly his disappointment in him, and Ward sought to avoid him.

It was not much studying he did that night, although he held his books in his hands until the bell for retiring was rung. He said little to Jack, and his room-mate soon seeing how he felt gave up all efforts at conversation.

The next morning when Mr. Blake and Big Smith

came into the chapel, their hands were bandaged, and they were the objects of many curious glances. The story already had spread through the school, and there were smiles on the faces of many of the boys as soon as they saw the two who had taken up the hot cannon ball on the preceding evening.

Jack's speckled face beamed benignantly upon all, and he seemed in nowise disturbed by the disgrace into which he had fallen ; but Ward sat quietly in his place, seldom glancing about him during the opening exercises. Once looking behind him he saw Big Smith holding his bandaged hands somewhat conspicuously before him and there was a smile upon his face which Ward could not understand. It might be the expression of a martyr, or it might be one of happiness and content. Perhaps it was a combination of both. Ward sat in fear until the service was ended. He had expected that Doctor Gray would make some reference to the trouble, but the boys were dismissed and not a word concerning it had been spoken. Somewhat relieved, he passed out of the chapel, and as Henry came near there was an expression upon his face which annoyed him greatly. It was almost that of a sneer. But as Ned Butler came up he said quietly: "Never mind, Ward, it's not so bad. You can straighten it all out before the term's over. I know it's in you and if you'll just take hold you can lead every fellow in the school yet. We all know that."

Ward said nothing, but looked his thanks and with a lighter heart passed into the Latin room. The boys look curiously at him as he entered, some laughing and

some apparently having no sympathy for him, but he said nothing and quietly took his seat.

"G. Smith you may begin the recitation," said Mr. Crane as soon as the class was in order.

"I can't, Mr. Crane," said Big Smith, rising and looking about the room.

"That will do. Hobart, you may begin then," said the teacher.

"Mr. Crane, I know the lesson," interrupted Big Smith. "I know it perfectly; but my hands cannot hold a book. Don't you see?" and he held his bandaged hands up to the view of all.

"Come to the desk and rest your book on that," said Mr. Crane quietly, checking the laugh which followed the display of Big Smith's hands.

"We'll fix him yet," whispered Jack. "What a baby! He beats every one in the school."

The failure which Ward made when he was called upon to recite, increased his feeling of bitterness. What was the use in his trying to do anything? Even if he wanted to do better, no one would believe him. And blaming every one except the one most to blame, Ward left the room when the recitation was ended.

The three weeks which followed were trying ones for him. Jack took his punishment good-naturedly and as a matter of course, but it was different with Ward. His conscience would not let him rest, and yet he would not give himself to his work. Day after day he became more careless, more indifferent. Occasionally he would enter a class well prepared and recite in a manner which clearly showed what he could do if he

would only exert himself ; but these days were rare and in the main he steadily dropped lower and lower.

Both he and Jack were careful not to do anything to bring a heavier punishment upon them, and they were eagerly waiting for the time to come when the "limits" would be over and again they would be free.

Ward found during these days that he was drawn more and more to certain of the East Hall boys and that they at least did not think less of him for the disgrace into which he had fallen ; but he knew these were not the students whose good opinion he most valued, and this very tendency to look upon him as a good fellow drove him from the others and drew him more closely to them. Henry had little to say to him. Pond was as cordial as ever, although Ward knew he did not approve of his course, and Ned Butler took especial pains to let him know that he was still his friend.

The three weeks were gone when Jack entered the room one day with an open letter in his hand. "Ward," said he, "I've just got a letter from Tim."

"Is he coming back now?" asked Ward quickly, aware that his room-mate was hesitating.

"Yes," said Jack. "He'll be here to-morrow. He's coming up so as to be here for the term examinations."

"I'll go back to West Hall then to-day," said Ward gloomily.

"I'm awfully sorry. I'd a good deal rather room with you than Tim. Maybe we can fix it before the year's over. Anyway, we can fix it for next year."

Ward made no reply, but at once collected his few belongings and soon was in his old room in West Hall.

Henry said nothing as he entered, and Ward was in no mood to talk. He wished he had never left West Hall, it was so much harder to come back after having had an experience in East. But it couldn't be helped now. He must make the best of it. He busied himself in arranging his bedroom and when he entered the study room Henry said quietly :

“Ward, you can room alone here next term.”

“What !” said Ward quickly, “I'm not good enough for you, am I? All right, I can stand it.”

“That's not it ; Ned Butler wants me to room with him.”

Then Henry was to have a good room and he had to come back to West ! Ward felt angry although he knew he had no just cause, but he said nothing more, and apparently busied himself in his work.

The next day Tim returned and was welcomed by the boys, or rather by some of them, with many expressions of pleasure. His arm was still carried in a sling and his face showed traces of his illness, but otherwise he was the same Tim as of old.

The following night, before study hour, Tim and Jack came over to Ward's room. He was alone and received them eagerly. They were his friends now and he would show them that he appreciated their kindness. “Ward,” said Jack, “we want you to join the ‘Tangs.’ Will you do it? It's a great honor, let me tell you, to get such an invitation. Not many fellows ever get the chance.”

Ward hesitated a moment and then said, “Yes, Speck, I'll join,” and the decision was made.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN ANCIENT AND VENERABLE ORDER

“WE’LL have the initiation next Saturday night,” said Tim, when at last the conversation was over, and the boys turned to leave the room.

“All right,” replied Ward. “I don’t know that it makes any difference to me when you have it.”

Alone in his room now, Ward sat for some time silent and thoughtful. He did not know just who or what the “Tangs” were, but they stood for the most disorderly element in the school, of that much he was well aware. And now by his own consent he was about to cast in his lot with them. He had not gone so far that his conscience ceased to trouble him, and there were moments when he almost decided to retract his promise. Mr. Crane had assured him that he could be one of the leaders of the class, and why should he not be? It was his own fault that he was doing as he did, and he had no one to blame but himself.

“I don’t care,” he said to himself at last. “The fellows don’t give me a fair show. Here’s Henry, he’s got so he tries to look down upon me ; and there’s Ned Butler, he won’t have much to do with me either.”

Ward knew the words were not true, for no one in the school had been more friendly when he had entered than had Ned Butler himself. Ward thought again of

Ned's words that the only safe course for a new fellow was to have a decided "yes" or "no" at the very start, and in that way save himself from all danger of drifting with the crowd.

There was no one in the school Ward respected more than he did Ned Butler and Pond, and as he realized that the very boys with whom he had promised to cast in his lot, looked up to them as they did not to himself, in spite of all their friendly words, his heart became a little more bitter still. "I'll get what fun I can out of it, anyway, and I guess I'll come out all right in the end."

The next day when Ned Butler sought him out and invited him to his room to have, as he said, a square talk with him, Ward's determination to join the "Tangs" was almost shaken. He was positive that Ned could know nothing of his invitation to join them, and yet if he had known, his words could hardly have been more fitly spoken. Without the least effort to "talk down" to Ward, he told him how sorry he was that he was slipping back in his work and standing in the school. He seemed to know just how Ward felt too, but instead of reproaching him, he had only words of encouragement and cheer.

"You can do it, Ward," he said, when his visitor rose to leave; "I know you can, and so does every fellow in the school. All you need, Ward, is just to shake yourself together, and take a good firm hold. You remember what I said the first night you were here, about a decided 'yes' or 'no,' don't you? Well, it isn't too late yet. It isn't always easy, but it

can be done. I know, for I've tried it myself. And when you think of what you can do, and what I know the folks at Rockford are expecting you to do, it's worth a trial, I'm sure. And, Ward, I'm not trying to preach either. I'm only an older brother, and trying to show you something I've learned from my own mistakes."

Ward made no reply, and Ned holding out his hand said, "Can't you do it, old fellow?"

"I'll see about it," said Ward quietly, and left the room. There was a tumult in his heart. He knew, if he promised to do as Ned wanted, it would mean a break with Jack and Tim, and yet was it not worth trying? If he should begin to work hard again, he could gain their respect, anyway, even if he did lose their friendship; and then too, there was the satisfaction he would have himself in doing his best. How proud his father and mother would be, if he should lead the class. His eyes grew soft as he thought of them, and he was just on the point of deciding to do as Ned wanted him to, when he met Jack and Tim on the campus.

"We're counting on you sure for Saturday night," said Tim. "It'll be a great lark, let me tell you."

"Yes, Ward, you'll have more fun to the square inch than you ever have had in your life. The 'Tangs' aren't digs or grinds, but they manage to get all there is to be had out of the school," said Jack. "I was somehow half afraid you wouldn't come in, but after you promised I knew that was all over. We'll be around for you soon after supper, Saturday night."

"All right," replied Ward soberly, as he passed on.

The word had not been spoken, and he had left the impression that he was still ready to join the "Tangs." He was not happy, and felt as if he was all wound up by cords which he could not break. "It's all right for Ned Butler," he thought as he walked on. "He has plenty of money, and is sure of a good time anyway. If he knew how I felt, he wouldn't talk as he does. I could do right too, if I was fixed as he is."

He knew his words were not true, for had he not himself heard Ned say how hard it was for him to do right? And yet Ned tried, and he knew it was no easy struggle for him either. If he could only bring himself to say that little word "no"!

The following day was Saturday, and Ward was still undecided. He avoided Jack and Tim, and many times changed his purpose. Once he started for Jack's room, determined to shake off his indecision and do his best; but he turned back and the struggle went on.

Soon after supper that night, Jack and Tim appeared in his room. "We're all ready, Ward. Come on, the fellows are waiting," said Jack.

The last chance had come, and Ward yielded. He could not say "no," and he arose and followed his companions.

When they stood on the stone doorstep a moment, Jack and Tim looked quickly up and down the street, and then Tim said:

"We'll have to blindfold you, Ward."

"What for?"

"Oh, that's a part of the initiation. You needn't be afraid, you won't be hurt."

“I’m not afraid,” replied Ward quietly, and the bandage was at once bound about his eyes.

Then his companions, each grasping him by an arm, walked with him rapidly out of the village.

On and on they led the way until it seemed to Ward they must have gone several miles, and not a word had been spoken. Several times they stopped and turned him quickly about and then resumed the march.

At last he was bidden to climb a fence, and, assisted by Jack, he made his way over it, and then he knew from the unevenness of the ground that they were walking across some lot.

The air was cold and snow was on the ground in places, and at last Ward broke out: “How much longer is this tomfoolery going on? I’m cold.”

No reply was made, but in a few moments he was bidden to step up, and then realized that he was standing on a floor of some kind. The journey had come to an end, and for a few minutes he was left standing alone.

“Remove the victim’s bandage,” said some one in a sepulchral tone, and Ward opened his eyes. He was standing on the floor of a barn, and about him were twelve figures disguised by sheets and masks.

A loud shout greeted him when the bandage was removed, and the twelve figures joining hands began a weird kind of dance about him. Sometimes they closed in upon him, and he was pushed about from point to point; and then again he was left standing in the center of the circle, which kept revolving swiftly about him.

At last the motion ceased, and the twelve figures

stood silent for three minutes. Not a word was spoken, and the dim light which came from the half-dozen lanterns hung about the place, made the grotesque figures appear stranger than before. The eyes of all were steadily gazing at him, but Ward only laughed and said nothing.

Finally one of the figures advanced within the circle, the others at once closing up so that no vacant place was left, and looking about upon the assembly, in a low solemn voice, said: "Are all the members of the ancient and venerable order of Orang-outangs here present?"

"We are all here," suddenly replied all together, and Ward was startled in spite of his efforts to be calm.

"Is every one of the quadrumanous mammals inhabiting Weston here?" said the speaker.

"No!" shouted all again suddenly in a tone that Ward thought could have been heard at Weston.

"How many are wanting?"

"One," came the answering shout.

"And who is it that is not here? Who is the absent brother?"

"Alas, it is the Lop-eared Roarer," said one advancing from the circle.

"Alas! alas!" said all the assembly, joining hands once more and moving slowly and solemnly about in a circle.

"And what has become of the brother, the Lop-eared Roarer?" said the one who had been spokesman before, advancing once more into the center when the procession halted.

“Alas, he has departed from our midst. He has entered college. Alas ! alas !” said the one who had replied before, again taking his place within the circle by the spokesman’s side.

“Is there any one fit to take the place of the departed Lop-eared Roarer ?” asked the other.

“There is, there is !” shouted all together.

“And who is it that is worthy to enter into the place of the departed Lop-eared Roarer ?”

“Ward Hill ! Ward Hill ! Ward Hill !” shouted the assembly together.

“And who vouches for his worthiness ?”

“We do,” said two of the masked figures, advancing within the circle.

“The Frizzle-tailed Gorilla and the Cross-eyed Whangdoodle vouch for his worthiness,” said the leader. “Brothers, is this satisfactory to you all ? If so, manifest it.”

A shout followed his words and the speaker resumed : “Is it your pleasure that he be tested further before he is accepted as one of us ?”

“Let him be tested,” said all.

“And which test shall we apply ? The major test, or the minor ?”

“The minor,” said most of the boys, although a few shouted for the “major.” The matter was put to a vote, and the “minors” had it by a small majority.

“Bring forward the candidate for the place of the departed Lop-eared Roarer,” said the leader ; and the Frizzle-tailed Gorilla and the Cross-eyed Whangdoodle, whom Ward strongly suspected to be the boys whom

he had known by the humble names of Jack and Tim, advanced and, grasping him by the arms, brought him before the leader.

“Have you the courage to become one of the ancient and venerable order of Orang-outangs?” said the leader to Ward, in a solemn voice.

“I think I have,” said Ward.

“He thinks he has,” groaned all the boys together.

“If you are admitted, do you promise not to reveal any of the secrets of the order?”

“I do,” said Ward.

“He does,” groaned all the boys again.

“Do you promise to fulfill all the duties that may devolve upon you?”

“Yes,” answered Ward.

“He does,” groaned the boys.

“Do you promise to stand by all the members of this order in good report or ill, in sickness or health, in poverty or wealth, in—in——” the voice of the speaker failed. He had forgotten the rest of the oath of allegiance.

“In thick or thin,” said one of the assembly, prompting the leader.

“Yes, in thick or thin,” resumed the leader. “Do you promise?”

“Yes, I’ll promise.”

“Yes, he promises,” groaned the boys together.

“Will you evanesce your own will and capitulate to the will of the order, whatever that may be?”

“Yes, I’ll evanesce and capitulate,” replied Ward, laughing in spite of his efforts to be sober.

“He'll evanesce and capitulate,” came the response from the assembly.

“Are you fitted to become a member of this ancient and venerable order?”

“I think so,” replied Ward.

“He thinks so,” shouted the boys.

“You will have to prove it then by the minor test, according to the will of the order.”

“What's that?” inquired Ward.

“Be silent,” said the leader; then turning to the two boys who still stood by Ward's side he said:

“Can he leap as becomes a Lop-eared Roarer?”

“He can,” replied the two boys. “He can,” echoed the assembly.

“Let him prove it by the minor test then,” said the leader, and almost before he was aware of what he was doing Ward found himself on his hands and knees, and he was compelled to leap, as supposedly an ancient and venerable Orang-outang would have done, three times around the entire circle.

“Is the test satisfactory?” asked the leader.

“It is,” groaned the boys.

“Can he climb as becomes a Lop-eared Roarer?” asked the leader.

“He can,” replied the two boys. “He can.” groaned the assembly.

“Let him prove it by the minor test,” said the leader solemnly. And Ward was compelled to climb the post which supported one of the beams in the barn.

“Is it satisfactory?” said the leader.

“It is,” groaned the assembly.

“Can he hang?” asked the leader.

“He can,” replied the two boys. “He can,” groaned the assembly.

“Let him prove it by the minor test,” said the leader, and Ward, once more climbing the post, was compelled to hang from the cross-beam as long as he was able. At last, when he could hang on no longer, he dropped and was caught in a horse-blanket held by a half-dozen of the sheeted boys, the leader counting out the seconds during the trial in a loud and solemn voice.

“Is it satisfactory?”

“It is,” replied the united voices.

“Can he endure?” again asked the leader.

“He can,” replied the two boys. “He can,” groaned the assembly.

“Let him prove it by the minor test.”

Ward’s arm was bared and a small “O. O.” was pricked into it with red ink.

“Is it satisfactory?” asked the leader.

“It is ; it is,” replied the assembly.

“Is there to be a feast?” inquired the leader.

“There is, but later, Most Worshipful,” replied one of the boys by Ward’s side.

“The Frizzle-tailed Gorilla replies that there is to be a feast, but later ; is it satisfactory?”

“It is,” replied the boys ; but the words were not spoken very enthusiastically.

“There remains but one test more,” said the leader turning again to Ward. “If you are able to meet that I pronounce you a member of the ancient and venerable order of Orang-outangs, and by virtue of my

office name you the Lop-eared Roarer. Can he hunt?" he added, turning to the boys.

"He can," replied the two by Ward's side. "He can," groaned all together.

"Let him prove it by the minor test," said the leader.

The bandage was again applied to Ward's eyes, and he was led out of the barn. He was turned about and led in various directions. At last a voice whispered in his ear, "Count one thousand and then tear the bandage away, and return to Weston."

Ward counted, and when he tore away the bandage found that he was standing alone in a country road.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE START FOR HOME

WARD soon realized that he was in a region with which he was not in the least familiar. The night was dark, and the wind, as it swept down through the valley, was biting and cold. The dim outlines of the hills furnished him with no clue as to the direction in which Weston lay, and as he looked up and down the road, he could not decide in which direction he ought to go.

Blindfolded as he had been, he could not recall anything to aid him in choosing his way, and yet as he looked at his watch and saw that only twenty-five minutes remained before the bell for retiring would be rung at Weston, he knew that he must act, and act quickly.

But in which direction should he go? In sheer desperation he started down the road, and had gone but a short distance before he saw a little farmhouse that stood by the roadside, and he decided to stop there and make inquiries. No lights were burning however, and he knew the occupants had in all probability been in bed for some time. Something must be done however, and turning into the yard, he approached the door and rapped loudly upon it.

His summons was answered by the loud barking of a large dog which quickly approached from the barn and

stood growling near him, as if he were determined to find out what a visit at that time of night meant.

A window was soon raised, and Ward heard a gruff voice above him saying, "Who be ye? What do you want? It's a pretty time to get folks out o' bed. What do ye want, anyway?"

"I'm sorry to disturb you," replied Ward; "but I've lost my way. I want to know where Weston is?"

"Weston! Weston is it? Be ye one o' them pesky students there? I'll report ye to Dr. Gray. The idea o' your bein' out sech hours as these, and a disturbin' peaceful folks too."

"I'm very sorry," said Ward again; "but if you'll only tell me the direction, I'll not trouble you any further."

"Tell him, pa, tell him!" Ward heard a voice within the house exclaim, and then the old farmer, leaning out of the window again, said: "Wall, ye want to go up the road about a quarter of a mile, and then turn to yer left. Keep on then for a piece and turn to yer right, and then the next turn to yer left will take ye straight into the village. But I'll report ye, I vum I will, the first chance I git."

Unmindful of his threats Ward ventured to ask one more question: "How far is it to Weston?"

"It's a good three mile and a half, that's what it is. Here you, Carlo," he added, speaking to the dog which advanced threateningly, when Ward, after a quick "Thank you," turned to leave.

The dog slunk away, and Ward soon found himself on the rough road again. Once there, he began to run

swiftly. Three miles and a half to Weston ! He knew he must be late now, and yet he ran on and on, sometimes feeling half afraid, so lonesome was the road and so dark was the night. His way led him through patches of woods, and the gloom was increased among their shadows. Sometimes he passed farmhouses, and the loud barking of the dogs warned him of other dangers that threatened him besides that of being too late to report in his room when the retiring bell rang. He stooped and selected a good-sized stick, and then pressed on more vigorously than before.

When he made the last turn the old farmer had indicated, he recognized the new road at once. He had been over it many times, and now he felt sure of his way. Weston could not be very far distant, but a faint sound of a bell just then broke in upon the stillness of the night.

He stopped and listened. It was the bell for retiring, and he was barred out and was still far from the village.

More leisurely now he walked on, for he was late anyway, and a few minutes more or less would not make much difference. The wind was rising, and a storm would soon be at hand. Already a few flakes of snow had fallen upon his upturned face, but it was only a faint token of the storm within his heart. Sometimes he laughed when he thought of the ridiculous experiences through which he had recently passed, and then again he would become more sober when he realized that for good or ill, and probably for ill, he had cast in his lot with the boys who certainly did not rep-

resent the best elements in the Weston school. What would his father think of it? How disappointed he would be, and how much he had counted upon Ward's doing well. How proud he had been of his success and popularity in Rockford before he had gone away from home. And what a change had come over him in the few weeks he had been at Weston!

It all had come because he had neglected Ned Butler's advice, and had not had courage enough to say "yes" or "no" at the very beginning. Ned Butler! He might have helped him, and he had the rather chosen Henry for his friend. Again Ward's heart became bitter, perhaps the more so because again the reflection came that he had no one to blame but himself.

Well, he could get along without Ned Butler or Henry either.

"Hello, Ward. You can hunt. You're back almost as soon as any of us." It was Jack's voice, and Ward who had been startled at first by the sudden hail, turned eagerly to his friend.

"I've only been waiting about ten minutes for you," said Jack. "I told the fellows you'd make good time."

"Where are they?"

"Oh, they hurried back so as to be in before the bell rang, but they didn't make it. They'll all get a good number of marks; but they're tickled to pieces with you, Ward. We never had a fellow who went through the initiation as slick as you did. They'll all bank on you now, Ward; and you mark my words,

you'll have more fun than you ever had before in your life."

Ward made no reply, for he was hardly in the mood to appreciate Jack's words. "You'll be late too, Speck," he said. "What were you waiting here for?"

"For you, my noble Lop-eared Roarer; and that makes me think. I'm to give you the grip and the password," and he explained both carefully to the new member of the ancient and venerable order of Orang-outangs.

"I'll have to leave you now," he said. "Mr. Crane gave me permission to spend the night with Monroe—he rooms down at Ma Perrins', you know; so I'm all right. Good-night."

"Good-night," replied Ward, as he left his friend and started for West Hall.

He slowly approached the door, wondering what explanation he could give to Mr. Blake for his being late. The lights appeared to be out in all the rooms. It must be nearly an hour after bedtime, and the great building seemed to frown upon him, as if it too shared in the displeasure at the belated condition of Ward Hill.

To his surprise the outside door was locked. He did not dare to rattle it, and for a moment thought of running after Jack and spending the night with him; but his friend already had disappeared from sight, and perhaps now was within the house of "Ma" Perrins. No, he must try something else.

He crept around to the side of the building and rapped gently upon the window of the room in which

Coxe and McClure roomed. They were classmates of his, and their room was upon the first floor, opposite Mr. Blake's. His first signal was not heard, but after a third attempt some one came to the window and gently raised it.

"Help me in, Coxe," said Ward in a low voice; "I got locked out."

His classmate opened the window and in a moment Ward had clambered in. He took off his shoes, and carrying them in his hand passed through the door which Coxe quietly opened for him, and crept noiselessly up the stairs. How guilty he felt. That was the way in which a thief might have stolen in. Several times he paused, thinking that the door of Mr. Blake's room was opened. What a predicament for him to be found in! But each time his fears were quieted, and at last he stood before the door of his own room. Taking his key he softly unlocked it and entered.

"Fine time of the night for you to be crawling in," called Henry from his bedroom. "I suppose you've been out with Tim Pickard or some other drunken rowdy."

"He's not a prig, anyway," replied Ward angrily. "He doesn't stand up and thank the Lord he's not like the other fellows. He's not a hypocrite, whatever else he is."

"No, he's the soul of honor," sneered Henry. "I'm glad I'm going to change my room, that's all I can say."

"You seem to be able to say some other things; but I'm glad you're going to change your room too."

The conversation ceased, and Ward was soon in bed, but it was a long time before he was asleep. He rolled and tossed, and the thoughts of his recent experiences kept passing through his mind. And he was honestly troubled by the gulf which was daily becoming wider between him and Henry. In his heart he loved and respected his room-mate, and knew that all the apparent unfriendliness was due to himself. Henry was so anxious for Ward to do well, knowing as he did his ability and also his impulsive disposition, that he showed it too plainly, but at the same time did not adopt the best manner either of restraining or encouraging his chum.

The next day was Sunday, and Ned Butler walked back from the church services with Ward and Henry. "I say, Ward," he said, after the conversation had gone on for a time, "I'm awfully sorry you've given up going to the school prayer meeting. Somehow I feel as if you needed them as I do."

"Bother," said Ward; "I don't want to go over there and hear Big Smith spout; he tires me."

"Big Smith isn't the only fellow there, Ward. There is Pond for example. I think he is one of the best and squarest fellows I ever knew. When he gets to be a preacher I'm going to vote to give him a call, that is, if Dr. Earle gives up by that time."

"Pond's a good fellow," replied Ward. "There is no discount on him. Well, I'll think about it."

"I wish you would, Ward. I don't mean to preach; I couldn't if I would; but I think you'd be helped. Do you know, I'm sometimes half afraid you'll join the

‘Tangs’ before you get through, and yet I know after all you wouldn’t go in with those fellows.’”

Ward flushed, but tried to turn the words aside as he laughed and said, “I don’t think I shall join them. But what’s the matter with them, anyway? I can’t see much wrong for my part.”

“Oh, there are some good-hearted fellows among them, I don’t deny that; but they’re not your kind, Ward. They’re all fellows with money, and they don’t come from such homes as yours. You can’t do the things they do, without going straight against your own conscience.”

The conversation was not altogether pleasing, and pleading some excuse Ward arose and left the room. He was satisfied that both the boys were talking about him when he was gone, and he knew they were troubled too; but he had gone too far now to retreat, or so the troubled boy tried to assure himself.

He soon found Jack, and the light-hearted boy at once banished all the good impressions Ned’s words had left. As they walked about the school grounds waiting for the dinner hour, Jack said: “Tim’s going to put off his spread till after vacation. He’ll make up for it then, Ward. I’m mighty glad you’re a full-fledged ‘Tang’ now. You’ll see some fun next term.”

“I hope so,” said Ward; “but just now I’m troubled about the examinations.”

“Bother the exams,” replied Jack. “We’ve got it all fixed. We’ll get through, and you can too, if you want to.”

“How? What do you mean?”

Jack took from his pocket some little rolls of paper, bound with rubber, and showed Ward how they could be used. On them were written, in very small characters, the chief points in each study which had been covered during the term. "We'll take these with the exams, and I rather guess we'll pull through."

"I sha'n't use them," said Ward quickly. "It isn't square."

"All right," said his companion; "no compulsion. I guess it's square enough. They all do it."

"No, they don't all do it," replied Ward. "Ned Butler, and Pond, and Henry won't, I know."

"No, they won't," Jack said significantly. "They won't have a chance. There goes the bell, and we'll go in and fill up now, Ward. Good luck to you."

Ward was troubled more than he realized by what Jack had said. It was to him a new phase of school life, but not yet had he brought himself to do anything which was directly dishonest, or so he tried to persuade himself. But Ward Hill was drifting, and no one ever yet drifted up the stream. Even Ward, could he have looked ahead, would have been shocked by what he saw. And it all turned upon the neglect of those little words "yes" and "no."

Ward worked faithfully during the three days of examination. He knew how important they were, and was doing his best to recover the lost ground; but when they were over he was far from being satisfied with himself and what he had done, and looked forward to the reports which would be sent home with fear and trembling.

At last the examinations were over, the last words of the doctor spoken, and the eager crowd of boys started in sleighs for Dorrfield to take the cars for home. A crowd of twenty-five accompanied Ward and Henry as far as the station where they were to take the cars that ran down the valley to Rockford. During the waiting time the boys walked up and down the long platform, eating the "fried pies" they purchased of the women who offered them for sale in the huge baskets they carried on their arms, and sang songs, and had such a time as only schoolboys, fresh from school, can have.

The school cheer followed them as they at last boarded their train, and the final portion of their journey was begun. And what a welcome they received when at last they arrived at home—such warm words and expressions of tender love.

Ward's heart sank when he thought of those coming reports. He again and again related the incidents and stories of his school life, of which his father never seemed to tire; but his fear did not depart.

On the second day after his return he entered the post office of the little village and received his father's mail. There were two letters with the postmark "Weston." One doubtless was his report, but what could the other be? He thought he recognized Mr. Crane's handwriting, and with a heavy heart he went back to his home, and without a word handed both letters to his father.

CHAPTER XXV

VACATION

WARD watched his father anxiously as he opened the letters. He had no reason to hope for a good record. He had not earned it, and did not deserve it ; but still he was hoping it would somehow not be so bad as he feared.

The first of the envelopes contained the form which Ward knew at once was the record of his work. His father read it carefully, and then holding it for a moment in his hand, seemed to be looking far away. He started to lay it upon the table, but changing his purpose handed it without a word to Ward, who received it with a trembling hand. After the name of each study was the word "Fair." It was not so bad as he feared, although he knew that his father must be bitterly disappointed. He knew that his good work in the early part of the term doubtless had raised his marks somewhat, and he was glad that he had done that much, anyway ; but his attention was at once diverted when he looked again at his father who had opened and was now reading the second letter. Ward could see that there was a softened expression upon his face, and once there was a look of pride ; but he read the letter through without saying a word, and then handed it to him. Ward took the letter and read it.

MY DEAR MR. HILL :

I cannot refrain from writing you a personal letter, as I send you by this mail the first report of your son Ward in the Weston school. He is such a bright lad, so popular with his mates and teachers, so promising in his ability, that he has won the hearts of us all. But I must not let these facts blind me to the true condition. While in his natural ability he easily stands among the foremost of the school, and I am satisfied could be the leader in his own class, he has not shown that careful attention to his work which it, and the school, demand. We ought not to rest content that a boy who can do "good" and perhaps "excellent" work, should stand only "fair" in all his classes. There are three or four things he sadly lacks, and I have thought that together, you and I, might labor to supply them.

First of all he lacks decision of character. His impulsiveness, which makes him popular, also makes him fickle and unstable. He does not decide and then hold steadily to his decision. He is swayed too much by his feelings.

In the second place, he trusts too much to the quickness of his mind. He has not learned how to work, nor has he learned the necessity of it as yet.

Then too he is weak in that he fears too much the opinions of his mates.

He is more afraid of what they will think than he is of doing wrong. His very popularity is one of his greatest dangers.

And last of all, I must say that I have been disappointed in his religious life. Perhaps I have expected too much from him. His work in my Bible class has shown me, far more than he realizes, the careful training he has received at home. But he neglects all that is

not absolutely required of him, and I fear his closest associates in the school have not been those who would aid him most.

Believe me, my dear Mr. Hill, I have written this letter just for Ward's sake. He is such a promising lad that I cannot bear to see him throw aside any of the promise. My sole purpose is to aid him and you ; and I shall be pleased to have you write me of anything, and at any time, that will help us to help him.

With cordial regards to Ward, and the wish for a pleasant vacation for him,

I am very respectfully yours,

ALBERT M. CRANE.

When Ward looked up he saw that his father's eyes were upon him, and that he was regarding him attentively ; but there was pride as well as disappointment in the expression upon his face.

"Mr. Crane is the squarest teacher in Weston. All the fellows say so," said Ward.

"I don't doubt that," replied his father smiling ; "but what do you think of his letter?"

"I haven't done my best, I can't deny that ; but you don't know how I have been handicapped. Doctor Boyd is a good man, but I've had to learn not to do a good many things he taught me to do. It's been hard work too."

"That may be so ; but Mr. Crane thinks you can do better. I don't care to add anything to what he has written. I hope that will be sufficient. Only, Ward, I do want you to do your best. I know you'll try now," and his father arose and left the room.

Ward hurried down to Henry's home, eager to learn

what his report had been, and was greatly relieved when he found that his also was "Fair." He said nothing of Mr. Crane's letter, although in its effect upon him it is doubtful whether Ward's purpose to do better was stronger than his pride in the belief the teacher had expressed that he could lead his class if he only chose to.

How many a bright boy has lost his best endeavors, just because he believed that he could do better, "if he only chose to." Ward had yet to learn the great lesson of life, that it is choosing to do, and doing what he chooses, which tests the highest ability of all in the end.

The days now passed rapidly. With the load gone from his mind by the coming of the reports and Mr. Crane's letter, Ward gave himself heartily to the enjoyment of his vacation. Always a favorite, it seemed now as if the young people of Rockford were doing all in their power to make his stay, and that of Henry, pleasant to them both.

They were beset with invitations of many kinds ; there were sleighing parties and entertainments, such as a little country village affords, for every day and evening ; and whenever Ward thought of Weston it was with the wish that he might not go back again. Here it was so much more easy to do right. There was no Tim Pickard with his money and his easy-going morals to tempt him aside. There was no Jack either ; for much as Ward had come to think of him, he could not but realize after all that the mischievous, happy-go-lucky, generous-hearted boy had not helped him to do his best.

Ward was like many another, who believes that whether he does right or not, depends more upon his associates than it does upon himself. He had promised himself and his father, after the reception of Mr. Crane's letter, that he would do better ; but whenever he thought of Tim and Jack, and above all of the "Tangs," his heart misgave him, and he feared for his promise.

Jack and Ned Butler were to spend the last week of the vacation in Rockford, the one with Ward, and the other with Henry. Their coming was eagerly awaited, and when at last they leaped from the train which brought them into the station, and the four boys unitedly gave the Weston cheer, the amazed country people looked on in wonder, thinking as one old man expressed it that "Bedlam was let loose among them youngsters."

The visitors entered heartily into the life of the young people at Rockford, which was all new and strange to them, but it was not long before they were regarded as "fine fellows," and the friends of our boys were the friends of all.

"No, there's no doubt about it," said Jack one night, as the four boys sat at the tea table with the family in Ward's home : "Ward's able to lead our class. But I don't want to see him just make a 'dig' of himself for my part. My father said the best things he learned at Weston were outside the classes."

"Yes, they all say Ward could be the leader," said Ned, looking kindly at Ward across the table. "He'll do it too, before the year's over."

"I know it, and I wish he would," said Henry. "You've got me over into your room now, and Ward won't have any one to disturb him next term."

"He won't, eh?" said Jack laughing. "The 'Tangs'——" He stopped abruptly, realizing that he had said too much, and Ned and Henry looked curiously at Ward, who was blushing in spite of all his efforts to appear unconcerned.

"The 'Tangs.' What are they?" inquired Ward's mother, looking at Jack.

"Oh, they're a-a-debating society," stammered Jack.

"An excellent idea," said Mr. Hill gravely. "A most excellent one. I hope both of you belong," he added, looking at Henry and Ned as he spoke.

"No, we don't," said Henry briefly.

"The winter term's the hardest of the year," said Jack trying to change the conversation. "There's no base ball nor anything much going on then. It's just dig and grind and snow."

"It's the best term for work, though," said Ned. "There's nothing to call a fellow's attention away from his work. He just has to study or he'll get so homesick he can't stand it. He has to work to kill time. Ward and Henry will find that out, though I don't know as Henry will so much, now that I've got him away from Ward."

"We're sorry to have him change," said Mrs. Hill. "He and Ward have been great friends ever since they were little boys. They have been almost like brothers."

“Yes, their souls have been knit together like the souls of David and Jonathan,” said Ward’s father.

“I don’t want to urge him to leave Ward,” said Ned quickly. “I know I’m selfish, but I’m all alone in my room, and have been so long that I thought I’d be glad to have him come. He’ll help me, and Ward can get on alone. Still——”

“Nonsense,” said Ward quickly. “Of course he’ll go. When a fellow gets a chance to change his room, and have such a chum as Ned, he’d be foolish not to take it.”

“We’ll make it up for Ward next year,” said Jack quickly. “My chum ’ll be gone then, and I’ll have Ward there to help me just as Ned’s got Henry. This winter, though, he won’t want any one to interfere with him, if he’s going to be the leader of the class,” and he looked comically at Ward, who sat next to him.

The dangerous places in the conversation had been passed over now, although Ward felt guilty whenever he looked at Henry or Ned. They knew just how he was doing, and that unless there was a very marked change in his life his prospect of leading the class was not very brilliant. But his father and mother knew nothing of what was passing in his mind ; that was one comfort ; and while they might soon be taught the truth, there was meanwhile the possibility that he might regain his lost laurels during the coming term.

And Ward thought that he really intended to do better. The praise of Mr. Crane had been very sweet to him, and yet somehow he had not fully seen that Mr. Crane’s letter had been one of blame after all. It

was more because he had not done well that he had written, than it was because of his ability to do better. But Ward, like many another, chose to receive only the words which pleased him, rather than the words which he knew to be true.

A crowd of young people assembled at the station when the time came for the boys to go back to Weston. They all had had such a good time during the week, and Ned and Jack had made so many warm friends that they were ready to declare that they would accept all of the many invitations which were given them to spend the summer vacation in Rockford.

At last, when the farewells were all spoken, and the train had stopped at the station, the four boys took their stand on the platform of the rear car, and called and waved responses to the laughing crowd of boys and girls left behind them. Rockford was soon lost to sight, and the boys entered the car and took their seats together.

The others were gay enough, but it was some time before Ward could bring himself to join in their good times. He was thinking of his father and mother, and how high their hopes had been raised for him in the coming term. Would he again disappoint them? The very laugh of Jack seemed to show it. And yet Ward honestly intended to do better, but he was conscious that he was already held back by his experiences of the preceding term. Could he break from them now? What would the "Tangs" think if he left them? It seemed to him as if he were held fast on every side, and yet all that Ward Hill needed even now was that little

decided "yes" and "no," of which Ned Butler had spoken on his first night in Weston.

"Why so pensive, Ward?" said Jack at last, who was sitting by his side.

"I didn't know that I was," replied Ward.

"I've got some great news for you."

"What is it?"

"I got a letter from Tim just before we left Rockford. I hadn't time to show it to you before."

"What does he say?"

Jack drew closer, and in a low voice began to explain the contents of Tim Pickard's letter

CHAPTER XXVI

AN UNINVITED GUEST

“TIM’S got an extra allowance,” said Jack. “Some aunt, or something or other, sent him a draft for fifty dollars as a Christmas present. He says he’s going to use it in a spread for the ‘Tangs,’ in honor of your joining.”

“What, the whole fifty dollars? That’s too much,” replied Ward, to whom that amount of money seemed like a vast sum. Money was not given away after that manner in Rockford.

“Oh, I don’t know about that. He’ll do the right thing. I told you you wouldn’t regret it if you joined the ‘Tangs,’ and you see my words are already coming true, aren’t they?”

“I don’t know,” replied Ward slowly. It was in his heart to tell Jack how much he regretted ever having joined them. The wish and hope of his father and mother were now fresh in his mind, and he had an honest desire not to disappoint them again.

Perhaps Jack realized something of what was passing through his companion’s mind, for he said: “Oh, don’t be afraid, Ward. We’ll all be glad to see you the valedic, every one of us; but you don’t want to be just a grind, do you? All we want is some fun along with all the hard work. We sha’n’t always be boys,

you know, nor shall we always be in the Weston school. So we want to make the most of all our chances while we have them."

"Yes, I know that's so," replied Ward, brightening a little. "I don't see why we can't have them both."

"We can," said Jack emphatically. "Don't you know how every old boy that comes back to the school always talks of the good times he had?"

"Yes. I've often thought of that, and wondered why it was that they talked so much more about their scrapes than they did about their work. But they all do."

"Of course they do. They take the work for granted, I fancy, and then the other comes in like the desert after dinner. We can't afford to do nothing but work, you know. We've got to have some fun along with all of our labors. All work and no play would make even Speck a dull boy," and Jack laughed heartily at his own joke.

Ward too joined in the laugh, and his spirits returned. Yes, he would work, and work hard, but there could be no harm in having a good time and some fun along with it all. That was the reasonable view to take of it, and that was what he would do.

At the various stopping places their schoolmates entered the car, and soon catching sight of the little group joined it, until gradually it became larger, and by the time they had arrived at Dorrfield the car was nearly filled with the laughing, boisterous crowd of Weston boys.

The snow lay deep upon the ground, and they were soon transferred to the sleighs which were in waiting for them, and were riding swiftly over the smooth road to Weston.

How different it all was now, Ward thought, from the time when he had taken that same ride in the preceding September. Then it was all new and strange, while now there was not a boy in any of the loads with whom he was not acquainted. There were the same overshadowing mountains, but now they were covered with snow. Still, they revealed many places with which he was familiar, and as he looked away to the Hump he recalled the experiences of mountain day, and glanced back at Pond who was on the seat next behind him.

“Been up to the Hump lately, Pond?” he said.

“Not during the vacation,” was Pond’s laughing reply. “That day last October was enough for me.”

His words set all the boys talking of that terrible experience, and Ward almost envied Pond. His boyish face was all aglow with health and happiness, although he was somewhat abashed by the praises of his companions. “There’s no doubt about his doing well,” thought Ward. Why was it that Pond could go steadily on, without yielding to any of the temptations of school life, and yet retain the good-will and respect of all? He knew there was not a boy in the entire school who was better liked than Pond, although he never tried to conceal the fact that he had no money, and never neglected his work for any one or any thing. “Why can’t I do it too?” said Ward to himself.

But the boys would not leave him long to meditate on such things, and soon Ward was laughing and shouting with the others. There was such an exhilaration in the swift ride over the snow in the dusk of the evening, there was such a contagion in the very life and spirits of his companions, that his gloomy thoughts were soon forgotten, and when they drove up before East Hall to leave the boys who roomed there, Ward stood up and led the cheering as they started on again.

“I’ve yer room alridy for yez, young gintlemen,” said Professor Mike when Ward and Henry entered West Hall. “It’s a good vacation I hope yez had.”

“Fine, Mike!” shouted Ward. “How was it with yourself?”

“Indade and I’ve bin busy, that I have. I didn’t know as a bit of a brick would be left in West Hall whin I was through cleanin’ up after yez. It’s mony a talk I’ve had to have wid the doctor. I’m nixt to the principal, ye know.”

“All right, Mike!” shouted Ward as he hurriedly entered his room, and prepared to hasten down to the dining hall for his supper. There the eager boys recounted their vacation experiences, and the time flew rapidly by.

The next day Henry removed his possessions to Ned Butler’s room, and Ward was left alone. He was truly sorry to have Henry go, for in spite of their differences during the fall term, Ward somehow felt that there was no one in the school after all who was so true a friend to him.

And his feeling of loneliness was not made lighter as

he realized that all Henry had wanted to make him remain was a word from him. One word would have restored all the pleasant relations of the former years, but Ward had not spoken it. He had felt too proud to protest. If Henry wanted to go, let him go. Ward arose and stood by the window when the bell for study hours rang out. The lights from the various buildings twinkled in the darkness. The wind was rising, and as it swept down through the valley it gave forth such a mournful sound that Ward knew a storm was gathering. And it seemed so lonesome too. The good times he had had during the vacation came trooping up before his mind. And here he was back in Weston, far from home, with all of the work to be done, and temptations to be faced which he did not feel sure he could wholly resist. He wished he was back in Rockford. There it was so much easier to do right. There no questions like these now before him had to be faced. For the first time since he had come to Weston he felt utterly wretched and homesick. The rap of Mr. Blake upon his door recalled him to himself, and answering the summons he soon seated himself at his study table and began his work.

For two days he worked hard. After all it was not so bad, this rooming alone. No one interfered with him, no one asked questions or interrupted him in his work. And for those two days no one in all the class recited as Ward did.

“You’ve begun the term well, Hill,” said Mr. Crane cordially as Ward started to pass out of his room after the Latin recitation of the second day.

“I’m going to try, Mr. Crane,” said Ward eagerly. “Indeed I am, and I want to thank you for that letter you wrote my father. He enjoyed it, and so did I, ever so much.”

“I didn’t write it exactly to make you enjoy it, Hill. That wasn’t my motive.”

“Yes, I know,” said Ward quickly; “but I hope it did me good just the same.”

“I hope so. And I trust that you will keep right on while I am gone.”

“Gone! Are you going to leave, Mr. Crane?”

“Only for three or four days. I’ve been called away suddenly; but Dr. Gray will take my classes.”

That night, before study hour, Jack and Tim came over to Ward’s room. His heart sank as they entered, for he saw at once by the expression upon their faces that some mischief was on foot. Could he resist? The test had now come again.

“Ward,” said Jack eagerly, “we’ve got it all fixed. We’ll have a high old time too.”

“Got what fixed?”

“Why the supper of the ‘Tangs.’ We’ve been a little slow in getting your spread ready, Ward, but it’s almost here now, and we’ll try to make up for lost time while we are at it too.”

“You needn’t make any spread for me,” replied Ward slowly. He might as well face it now as at any time.

“Oh, but we want to,” said Tim. “No fellow has ever joined the ‘Tangs’ yet, they tell me, without having a feast given him. The last fellow that joins has to

give one for the next to be initiated. I was the last to join before you, and it's my turn now, though they didn't put you through as they did me. They gave me the major test every time."

"We did that," said Jack, with a laugh. "Tim had been anxious to join for a long time, and when at last we took him in, we made up our minds we'd see whether he was fit to join or not."

"Well, you saw that I was fit, didn't you?" asked Tim.

"We just did that," replied Jack, laughing again. "We gave him the major every time."

Ward had been silent for several minutes. There was a struggle going on in his mind. At first he had fully determined that he would tell the boys that he must resign from the 'Tangs.' He had come back to Weston to work this term, and work he must. But when Tim had explained how each new member, after his initiation, was expected to give a spread to all the members when the next one joined, his heart failed him. How he ever was to secure the money with which to do that when his time came, as come it must and soon, he did not know; but if he should resign now, he would at once be accused of doing so because he was unwilling to furnish a feast in his turn.

Even then he might have decided aright, but he was held back, as many a foolish boy, and man too, has been by the fear of appearing penurious and small. And boys have little mercy in their judgments. Ward was afraid to do it, and although he was frightened when he thought of what he must do when his turn

came, he apparently gave way, and listened attentively to what his visitors had to say.

“We’re going to have it on Saturday night up in our room in East Hall, Ward. Don’t eat too much veal at the ‘hash-house’ before you come up. We’re going to have a turkey. I bought one, and hired Jacob’s wife to cook it for me.” Jacob was the colored janitor of East Hall, and was never unwilling to receive small sums from the boys for labors which he would not have wanted reported to Dr. Gray.

“Have you got permission to have a dinner there?”

Tim laughed heartily, as he replied: “Permission! Well I rather guess not. We wouldn’t get it if we did ask. But Mr. Crane is going to be away, so we’ll be all right.”

Yes, Ward knew Mr. Crane was to be absent, for he himself had told him. His other words however he did not choose to recall at the time.

“Eight o’clock sharp,” said Jack, as he and Tim turned to go. “Don’t come with any one. We’ll have to come in still, and one by one, so as not to arouse suspicion.”

“All right, I’ll be there,” replied Ward, as he began his lessons, for the bell had now been rung.

But study he could not. He knew that he had fallen at the very first trial, and that instead of freeing himself from the evil influences, he was entangled more deeply than before. He tried not to think of it, but all through the following day he was struggling with himself, while knowing all the time that he was moving on in the very way the “Tangs” most desired.



"There came a loud rap at the door."
Page 251.

Just before eight o'clock, on the following evening, he left West Hall and sauntered leisurely over toward East. He met Henry and Ned, who invited him to go with them over to the doctor's ; but declining, Ward hastened on and soon was admitted into Tim's room.

Almost all of the "Tangs" were there before him, and what a sight it was upon which he looked ! The table in the center of the room was spread with the feast. A huge turkey reposed temptingly in the middle, and was surrounded by dishes of many kinds. Three or four bottles were on the table too, and as Ward saw them he was almost tempted even then to turn and leave the room.

Before he could take any such action however, the boys all greeted and welcomed him ; the door was quickly bolted, and Tim, turning to the others, said : "The Lop-eared Roarer has come, boys. What shall we do? Draw up to the table," he added, without waiting for a reply. "There aren't chairs enough to go around so some of you sit on the floor. I'll do the honors of the occasion."

The boys quickly seated themselves as they had been bidden, and Tim, taking a huge knife, advanced toward the table. He had just cut one slice from the turkey when there came a loud rap on the door.

"It's Dr. Gray," said Jack aghast. "I know his rap every time. What shall we do, fellows?" The boys looked at one another in consternation. For a moment no one spoke, and then the silence was broken by another rapping upon the door, louder, more imperative than before.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHAT BECAME OF THE FEAST

THOROUGHLY aroused now by the repeated summons for admission, the boys hastily cleared the table, hiding the dishes in the bedrooms and closets, while Jack, taking a long string, tied it to the legs of the turkey and lowered the fowl from the window outside the building ; and then, after carefully fastening the string, quickly closed the sash upon it.

It seemed as if scarcely a minute had passed before all signs of a feast had disappeared, and the frightened boys had also concealed themselves in the closets and bedrooms, Ward seeking the shelter of the coal closet, and so eager was he to escape that he had climbed up the sides, holding on by forcing his fingers and toes into the wide cracks between the boards. Just why he thought he would be safer if he clambered up the begrimed sides of the dusty coal closet he could not have explained, but he thought he must do something, and this was the first to present itself.

The rapping upon the door was now repeated for the third time, and was followed by a call which Tim and Jack, who in desperate haste, had seated themselves by the study table as if they were hard at work, although Jack was holding his book upside down, had no difficulty in recognizing as that of Dr. Gray's.

“Why, good-evening, doctor,” said Jack, who opened the door. “Is it you? You must excuse us for not opening the door before; we never can tell whether it’s some of the fellows who want to bother us, or some of the teachers, you know. Take this chair,” he added, as he rolled the largest and most comfortable of all the chairs in the room toward their visitor.

“Yes,” said Tim, who arose as soon as the principal entered, “we were so busy studying we didn’t hear your other raps. Please excuse us. Let me take your hat and coat.”

The doctor’s eyes were twinkling as he replied: “How did you know I rapped before, if you did not hear me? I must confess it is quite a surprise to find you studying on Saturday evening. You must be very fond of your work. I don’t think many of the boys are working now.”

“No, most of the fellows don’t have to dig as we do,” replied Jack soberly, still holding his book in his hand. “All this Latin and Greek comes hard to me, and I don’t see what my father wants me to study it for, anyway. I’m going into business with him, and I sha’n’t have much use for it then.”

“Probably not,” replied the doctor dryly, “especially if you study it upside down, as you are doing now.”

Jack glanced quickly at the book in his hand, and for the first time saw that he was holding it as the doctor hinted. Even he was somewhat confused, while Tim laughed outright.

Dr. Gray meanwhile had removed his hat and

overcoat, and seated himself comfortably in the chair Jack had provided for him, and then began to talk with the boys. He brought up various topics of the school life, inquired their opinions concerning the prospect of the baseball nine in the spring, conversed with them about their homes and the life in the great city, but did not mention that which was uppermost in the minds of both his hearers, and indeed of all his hearers, for the other boys in their hiding places were striving to hear what the doctor was saying. He talked easily and steadily, not seeming to notice the breaks which came when the troubled boys either made no reply, or in their confusion spoke without realizing what they were saying.

A half-hour passed in this way, and he showed no disposition to leave. Another quarter of an hour went by, but still the doctor sat in the great chair talking affably, and apparently unaware, or ignoring the fact if he saw it, that his young hearers were becoming more and more uneasy.

They detected each other in casting troubled glances toward the bedrooms and the closets. If the doctor were to stay much longer, some of those boys, who were all cramped up in their places of concealment, would be able to restrain themselves no longer. Would he never go? Jack began to suspect that Dr. Gray was intending to stay until something happened. A sudden crash or fall in the coal closet just then caused both of the boys almost to start from their chairs, but their visitor apparently did not hear or heed it.

An hour had gone now, but there were no signs of

departure on the part of the principal. Could anything be done to induce him to leave? Jack felt certain that he knew of the presence of the others, and he was about to tell him the true condition, believing now that he would not go until this had been done, when the doctor asked him a question :

“ You board at Mrs. Perrins’ still, do you not? I have not heard of any change on your part.”

“ Yes—no—I’m not sure. What did you say, doctor? ” said Jack in confusion.

“ I merely inquired whether you still were taking your meals at Mrs. Perrins? ”

“ Yes, we do,” said Jack as soberly as if he were speaking under oath.

“ Oh, I thought so. It is a most excellent place. She provides bountifully for you all, I doubt not.”

“ Yes ; they say it’s the best table in Weston. I’m perfectly satisfied with it, anyway.”

“ Yes, I should say so. Do you know, I thought when I first entered your room that I could detect the odor of roasted fowl? Of course I must have been mistaken, for boys who are as well provided for as you say you are by Mrs. Perrins, would not be apt to have any food in their rooms. It must have been a fancy on my part.”

“ You don’t object to the fellows having a spread in their rooms sometimes, do you, doctor? I never thought there would be any objection to that. Are you opposed to it, doctor? ”

“ By no means ; although you, of course, would have no temptation or desire for that, as you are so well pro-

vided for by Mrs. Perrin. No ; I should have no objection to a spread, as you call it, in the rooms of the students occasionally, provided, of course, that they first mentioned it to the teacher in charge of the building, and obtained his consent. Otherwise I should be very decidedly opposed to it, as it might very easily lead to excesses on the part of some."

Neither of the boys made any reply, and the doctor added, as he arose : "But I think I must be going. Mrs. Gray will be wondering what has become of me."

"Won't you stay, doctor?" said Jack with a sigh of relief, but feeling bound to ask the question.

"Why, yes, I think I'll stay a little longer, since you desire it," said the doctor, seating himself once more in the easy-chair. "I feared I might disturb you. It is such an unusual thing for me to find the boys studying on Saturday evening, that at first I hardly knew what to make of it. And to think that you were so busily engaged that I was compelled to rap three times before I could make myself heard ! Ah, this will be a source of great pleasure to Mr. Crane when he returns, and I tell him of it."

With a look of dismay which the boys could not entirely repress, they resumed their seats, but their visitor apparently was all unconscious of everything but their invitation for him to stay longer.

He continued his conversation, if conversation it could be termed when almost all the words were spoken by one. He made suggestions as to the best methods of doing their work, commending them again and again for their diligence in studying on a Saturday night.

He looked over their books which they tremblingly handed to him at his request, for they were so marked and interlined as to be far from presentable, but he made no remarks about their condition, apparently being interested chiefly in the fact that he should have found them studying so busily at a time when there were no study hours required. There was however a kind of a twinkle in his eyes that made Jack and Tim more and more uneasy. They were satisfied that he knew just what their plans for the evening had been, although they could not conjecture how he had discovered them.

Another half-hour passed, the doctor still doing the most of the talking, and apparently ignoring the growing uneasiness of the boys. Their replies to his questions were brief now and abrupt, and at every moment they expected to see one of the doors opened, and some one of their companions appear.

Finally the doctor rose again and said: "The bell for retiring will soon be rung, and I really think I must be going now. I have enjoyed my evening very much, and I trust that you will forgive me for interrupting your studies. I must go now, however, as I want to call upon a few of the other boys before the evening is over. You must return my call, and I can assure you that both Mrs. Gray and myself will be pleased to have you come often."

Jack did not repeat his invitation this time for the doctor to remain, and in his eagerness to have him go he went before him, and held open the door.

"Good-night, boys," said the doctor soberly, shaking hands with each. Even then he delayed as he

stood by the door, and Jack thought he was scanning closely the doors to the bedrooms and closets. The boy was in a highly nervous state now, for he feared that the others, hearing the last words of the doctor, would come forth from their hiding places before he was gone.

At length the principal departed, and the boys waited a moment to make sure that he had really left the building before they went back into their room.

Once there they closed and bolted the door, and then, relieved from the long strain, Jack seated himself and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks. Tim, however, wasted no time in summoning their companions, and in a moment the room was filled with the boys. And a sorry spectacle some of them presented. Ward's face and hands were covered with coal dust, and as he looked ruefully at himself in the mirror, he said :

“I look as if I'd had a spread, don't I? I hung on to the sides of the closet just as long as I could, and when I dropped I thought I'd started straight for China. I was afraid he'd hear me, too.”

“Hear you !” said Jack. “You came down like a load of bricks. I thought the roof had fallen in. But there sat the doctor, and he never winked. He just pretended he didn't know anything about it, and he had that lamblike expression which he always puts on along with his Sunday suit, and he looked just as innocent as a baby. He did, honest.”

“Well, he kept me shut up there under the bed,” said one of the boys, “till I thought I'd grown fast to the floor. You can't fool Dr. Gray. He knew what

he was doing all the time ; but I don't believe he knew who was here."

"Look at me," said another. "I was crawling around there on the floor trying to get behind Russell, but he wouldn't let me. Every fellow seemed to want to get just as far away from the door as he possibly could. He expected the doctor to open it, and he didn't want to be the first to be seen."

"Come on, fellows, let's get out of this. I've had enough for one night," said another of the boys, starting toward the door.

"No, hold on," said Tim quickly. "We've got time enough yet. Bring out the stuff and we'll stow it away in short order. It's too bad the doctor interrupted us, but we've time enough yet before the bell rings to make a start, anyway. Bring it out and put it on the table."

A silence followed Tim's words, and some of the boys looked foolishly at one another. "Why don't you bring it out?" said Tim again. "Here, I'll get it myself," and he started quickly toward the bedroom, unmindful of the fact that some of the boys were edging toward the hall door. They all waited a moment until Tim came out. There was a look of blank astonishment upon his face. "There's nothing in there but the dishes. What's become of all the stuff that was in them, I'd like to know?"

None of the boys at first made any reply, and Jack, throwing himself upon the floor, began to laugh as if he could not control himself. "Oh, Tim! Oh, Tim!" he groaned. "Oh, the lost dinner! Oh, the gour-

mands ! The fiends ! They've stored it all away, they have, every bit of it."

Tim glanced angrily at the boys and said, "Is that it? You don't mean to say you've eaten all that stuff in there while we were out here with the doctor, do you?"

"Well, Tim," said Russell slowly, "it was about this way. We didn't intend to. We didn't, honestly. But when we rushed in there, each fellow with a dish in his hands, we braced up against the door and held on for dear life. Pretty soon we began to feel tired, and when the doctor kept staying, why we began to feel hungry, you know. Rather wanted breakfast, you see. So each fellow just began to taste of the stuff in the dish he had, and before he knew it, it was all gone."

"All the pies and everything?" said Tim angrily, looking about him once more.

"All the pies and everything," groaned Jack rolling over again and hugging himself in his glee.

"Never you mind, Ward," said Tim quickly; "the turkey's left, anyway. You and I'll have a bite of that."

"We don't mind, any of us," said the boys crowding about Tim as he opened the window and drew up the string.

Slowly and carefully Tim drew up the burden, and at last, with one quick jerk, seized it and closed the window.

The boys were all about him, and as soon as he held up his prize they all looked blankly at it and at him a

moment, and then burst into shrieks of laughter. "Oh, Tim!" "Give us some of the bird!" "What a beauty!" were among the shouts which greeted him. Tim was holding nothing but the bare skeleton of the turkey in his hands. Every particle of the meat had been cut from the bones.

"Who did that?" shouted Tim, but no one replied. The tears were coursing down Jack's face, and the boys were slapping one another on the back, shouting, laughing, and vainly trying to find some suitable manner of expressing their delight.

"He did it! He did it!" said Jack, pausing for a moment and pointing at Big Smith, who had just entered the open door.

"Did you do that?" asked Tim, pointing at the skeleton of the turkey. "Did you do that?"

"Was that your turkey?" said Big Smith in the slowest and deepest tone of voice, which served only to irritate Tim the more.

"Was that my turkey!" shouted Tim. "Whose did you think it was?"

"I happened to be calling on Wilkinson to-night," said Big Smith, in his most solemn tones; "he rooms below you, you know. Well, about an hour ago I went to the window, and what should I behold there directly before it, and clearly to be seen in the moonlight, but a turkey. It was hanging there in the air. I at once called Wilkinson's attention to the strange sight, for it was strange to me. I had never seen anything like it before in my life. Turkeys don't grow in that way around where I live."

He paused a moment to gaze in surprise at the boys whose laughter was renewed by Big Smith's story.

"Go on, Big Smith, go on," said Jack as soon as he could speak.

"Well, as I said, I called Wilkinson's attention to the strange sight. I was hungry. There was a turkey all ready and hanging right in the air before us. It was without any visible means of support. I thought of the manna. That turkey was there because I was hungry. I took and ate. It was good and I ate it."

"What, all of it?" and Jack laughed again.

"No," replied Big Smith soberly. "I suggested to Wilkinson that we should save some till to-morrow, but no, he insisted upon treating some of the boys. So he called in Henry, and Ned Butler, and a few others, and they partook too. There's nothing left. I am sorry to say it, indeed I am, but it's all gone. All but the bones, and I think you still have them," he added pointing to Tim's hand.

Again the boys broke into shouts of laughter; but Tim was angry. "Then you ate the turkey, did you?" he demanded of Big Smith.

"Only a part, a very small portion. I was hungry, and it did not seem to me right to leave that brown and beautiful turkey out there in the cold; indeed I couldn't do it. It wouldn't have been right."

"I'll fix you," replied Tim in a low voice. He was thoroughly angry. It was hard to lose the feast, but it was far worse to be laughed at by his companions. Jack, who knew his room-mate thoroughly, seized Tim's arm just as he drew it back threateningly,

and whispered : “ Don’t hit him, Tim. Look at the door.”

Tim glanced quickly in the direction Jack indicated, and his arm dropped in a moment. There, standing in the open doorway, was Dr. Gray.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SUPPER IN DORRFIELD

DR. GRAY was the first to break the silence which followed the discovery of his presence. Tim had quickly drawn back among the boys, and quietly opening the window had dropped the telltale turkey bones outside.

Jack meanwhile had advanced to greet the principal, and was the only one of the company who contrived to maintain even the semblance of self-possession. How long the doctor had been standing there, or how much of the conversation he had overheard, even he could not determine; but striving to appear unconcerned, Jack said: "Excuse me, doctor, I didn't notice that you were standing there. Won't you come in and take a chair?"

"No," replied the doctor; "I forgot my cane, and think I must have left it here in your room."

"I'll find it for you," said Jack as he began to look about the room. "Here it is," he added, when a moment later he handed the doctor his missing stick. "I hadn't noticed that you left it or I would have brought it to you and saved you the trouble of coming back again for it."

The doctor smiled slightly as he replied, "Thank you. It's no trouble. You seem to have more of a

company present than was here when I left a few minutes ago."

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "the boys all seem to like to drop in here. We're glad of it."

"Although they may interfere with your studies," said Dr. Gray, and Jack thought he detected a twinkle in his eyes as he spoke. He had the reputation among the boys of appreciating a joke, even when he felt in duty bound to punish the offenders strictly.

"Oh well, we'll have to make it up, that's all," laughed Jack. "Schools are forever, and men and boys only for a time. Isn't that what you've told us, doctor?"

"I believe I have made some remarks of that kind," replied the doctor grimly. "I'll not detain you longer, however, this time," he added as he turned to leave the room.

Big Smith slipped quickly out of the door after him, and as soon as they had gone Tim said: "The sneak has got away this time, but we'll fix him yet. He can't work his game on the 'Tangs' and not hear from them again. The idea of him stealing our feast."

"He didn't get it all," said one of the boys. "There was one pie I can declare Big Smith never touched. I was there myself, and I know what I'm talking about."

"No, nor did any other fellow get a show at it either, Sawyer," said another. "But come on, fellows; it's time for the bell, and after such a feast of reason and flow of soul as we've had to-night we don't want

to spoil our records by being marked late after the retiring bell."

"Hold on a minute, Ward," said Tim, as Ward started to leave the room with the other boys. "I want to say something to you. You won't be late; wait a bit."

Ward lingered after the others had gone, and Tim said: "Never mind, Ward, you sha'n't lose your spread. I'll fix that, never you fear. And I'll make it up for you too. You don't look as if you had had a very high time to-night, and it wasn't your fault anyway."

Ward looked at his hands, which were black with the coal dust, and made no reply.

"What'll you do, Tim?" asked Jack. "Mr. Crane will be back on Monday, and the doctor will put him up to be on the lookout for us. That was all gammon about his leaving his cane here. He left it on purpose, and he knew the fellows were all cooped up here. That was why he stayed so long, and he thought when he came back he'd catch us all at it."

"Do you think he saw me?" inquired Ward anxiously. "I kept well back in the crowd all the time he was talking."

"See you, my innocent? Of course he saw you. Perhaps he took you for a gentleman of color with all that black stuff on your face and hands; but never you fear, he saw you all the same. You can't fool Dr. Gray. He knows what we're up to every time, and that's what makes me ask Tim how he expects to give another spread here very soon."

“I’m not going to give it here,” replied Tim. “I’m not as green as I look, or as you are.”

“What will you do then, Tim? I confess I don’t see how you’re going to do it.”

“Do it! I’m going to take Ward, and you, and one or two of the other fellows, and go over to Dorrfield; that’s what I’m going to do. But I won’t take one of these fellows that swallowed my spread when they hid in the bedrooms; you can rest your souls on that, my friends.”

“Right you are. That’s right, Tim,” said Jack. “We’ll withdraw to the quiet of Dorrfield, where neither Big Smith nor Dr. Gray can interrupt us nor steal our spread. But it was mighty kind of Big Smith to leave those bones, Tim. You ought not to have thrown them away. They’d have made good soup. Turkey soup is all right, isn’t it, Ward?”

“If we don’t fix Big Smith, then my name’s not Tim Pickard,” said Tim, his anger returning again as he thought of his loss. “That turkey won’t set well with him!”

“Yes, I think B. Smith does require a little attention,” replied Jack; “but really, Tim, you can’t blame the fellow. What would you have done if you’d seen a big turkey all cooked, and begging to be eaten, keep a tap-tap-tapping at your window pane? You’d have done the same thing, you know you would; only I don’t believe you’d have left the bones, and Big Smith and Wilkinson did that, even you will have to own up,” and Jack began to laugh again as he thought of the expression upon his chum’s face, when he had

drawn through the open window that bundle of clean and dry turkey bones.

Tim only scowled by way of reply, and called out to Ward, who was standing by the door ready to go now : “ You’ll not be the loser, Ward ; I’ll make it up to you with interest added.”

“ All right,” said Ward ; “ though I’m satisfied as it is. Good-night, fellows. I’m off for West Hall.”

“ Good-night,” replied both of the boys, and Ward quickly closed the door and started down the stairs.

Somehow the joke which had been played upon Tim Pickard was soon known throughout the school, and many were the sly allusions which were made to turkey bones. Tim, however, managed to restrain his temper fairly well, and seldom replied to the bantering of his companions ; but his feeling toward Big Smith was only waiting for the suitable time and manner in which to assert itself.

Nor was his promise to Ward of a “ spread ” at Dorrfield forgotten, and it came to pass one Saturday night, two weeks after the scene in Tim’s room, that the arrangements were all complete, and two of the “ Tangs,” in addition to Ward and Jack, were to accompany him to that village.

Tim had engaged a small private room in the hotel, and in this the feast was to be spread. The plan was for the boys to creep out of their rooms soon after the retiring bell was rung, and meet below the hill beyond East Hall, where a large sleigh would be in waiting for them. Jack had bribed the colored janitor of East Hall, and the key to the large door in the hall was to

be left where they could readily find it. Ward did not dare to tempt Professor Mike to do likewise, as he was well aware of his loyalty to the principal, to whom he boasted he was "nixt" in authority; but he had obtained a key to one of the unoccupied rooms on the first floor of West Hall, and by leaving the outside window unfastened, he was sure of an easy exit and entrance at any time.

Soon after the bell was rung, Ward with his overcoat on, and with his shoes in his hand, crept quietly down the stairs, feeling like a thief, as indeed he was although it was Ward Hill from whom he was stealing the most. He stopped for a moment before Mr. Blake's door, but as there were no signs that any one was watching, he stole noiselessly by, and soon had opened the door of the unoccupied room. He gently raised the window and dropped out upon the ground. He quickly put on his shoes, and then ran toward the meeting place.

The other boys were all waiting for him, and as he approached, Tim said: "We were half afraid you weren't coming, Ward. We didn't know but your conscience had got the better of you."

"Conscience! Who's talking about Ward Hill having a conscience?" said Jack. "Why you could stick a pin in it, and he'd never flinch. Ward hasn't got such a thing in his whole make-up."

The boys laughed, and Ward made no reply as they quickly seated themselves in the sleigh, and the driver, whom Tim had bribed to secrecy, took up the reins and started for Dorrfield.

But Ward was far from being happy. Jack's words had hurt him more than he had known.

No conscience ! Then that was the way in which he was regarded, was it ? And it couldn't be hurt even if he had one, nor feel any pain whatever he did. Ah, it was troubling him sadly even then. The other boys seemed to be happy, and were apparently hugely enjoying themselves. Why was it he could not enter into the sport as they did ? He tried to throw off his gloomy feelings, but in spite of all his efforts, for a time the thoughts of his father and mother, and of Henry and Ned Butler, and of Mr. Crane also, kept intruding themselves.

What would they think of him if they only knew ? And this was what Tim called having a good time, was it ? Certainly he seemed to be enjoying himself, but Ward was thoroughly wretched, and he could not succeed in entering in the least into the spirits of the others until they drove up before the door of the hotel in Dorrfield.

An apparently warm welcome was given the boys by the proprietor, who ought to have been ashamed of himself for the part he was taking in aiding these Weston schoolboys in such a disgraceful affair as that upon which they had entered.

"Go right up to your room, boys," said he ; "everything is all ready and waiting for you. Ah, boys will be boys. I don't blame you for having a bit of a lark. It must be pretty dry picking over at Weston. Boys must have some fun, and for my part I don't blame them a bit."

The boys passed rapidly up the stairs to the room which had been reserved for them. The "spread" was soon ready, and then to the surprise of all, Ward's mood suddenly changed.

From being the most subdued of the party, he apparently became the gayest. He laughed the loudest, and sang, and told his jokes until they all were looking at him in surprise. They little knew how desperate the unhappy boy was, and how he was forcing himself to forget all that was troubling him, and to forget even his best self in throwing himself without reserve into the spirit of the occasion.

"What's that?" he said suddenly, when the waiter entered with several bottles on a tray.

"That?" said Tim. "That's champagne, my young innocent. I'm going to give you a taste of the stuff to-night, and you'll say its the best you ever had in your life."

"Not much, you're not," replied Ward, sobered again in a moment. He had been brought up to look with horror upon all drinking, and not even his present desperate feelings could interfere with his determination. Touch it he would not, and not all of Tim's powers of persuasion served to change him. This was one thing he would not do.

"All right, Ward," replied Tim. "You'll come to it after a time."

Jack only took a little, as perhaps the influence of Ward's example was not altogether lost upon him; but the other boys all followed Tim's example, Tim taking most of all.

The company soon became noisy. They shouted and sang boisterously, until even the proprietor felt compelled to come in and warn them. Still the feast went on; but all of Ward's pleasure was gone now. He felt disgusted, and yet how was he to find much fault with the others? Was not he almost as guilty as any of them, and although they had gone a step farther than he, still he was one of them and one with them.

It was well toward morning when the party started back for Weston. With all their efforts they could not restrain the noisy Tim, who insisted upon giving the school cheer whenever they passed any of the farmhouses on the way. As they approached Weston he ceased to be noisy, and was only silly, stupidly looking about him, and apparently unconscious of all that was passing.

There was a feeling of unutterable loathing in Ward's heart. He felt sick and disgusted with it all, and most of all with himself. He was silent all the way back, and when they entered the village, and the boys left the sleigh, Jack said: "Some one will have to help me with Tim up to his room. I hope we can get in without waking Mr. Crane. It means expulsion for us all if he hears us."

"I'll help you," said Ward quietly.

"No, you won't, Ward," replied Jack quickly. "You'll have no hand in this. These fellows will take hold. You go right over to your room and don't wait here a minute. Do as I say."

Ward turned and left his companions and made his way noiselessly up to his room. If he had felt guilty

when he had gone, how much worse did he feel now. He had been one of those who had disgraced themselves, and if they should be discovered, he could expect no mercy for himself. And this was what Tim called having a good time. Ward shuddered. He never had had a more wretched night in all his life. Heartsick, conscience-smitten, discouraged, and utterly wretched, it was long before he fell asleep, and when he awoke in the morning he found that he had a wretched headache, and could not go to church. However he was not disheartened over that, for he was almost afraid to meet his late companions, or to hear reports from them.

Pond brought him his breakfast from the dining hall, and as he sat in the room watching Ward as he made a feeble attempt to eat, he suddenly said :

“Ward, you know I’m your friend, don’t you?”

“Yes,” replied Ward, looking at Pond a moment in surprise. “Yes, you are, Pond. Why do you speak of it?”

“Well, Ward,” said Pond, “I’ve been wanting to speak to you for some time ; and if you’ll let me now, I think I’ll do it. Do you object?”

“No,” replied Ward in a low voice.

Pond’s voice was trembling, and Ward thought he could detect tears in his eyes. He was subdued in a moment, and almost forgot his headache as he waited for Pond to begin.

CHAPTER XXIX

BIG SMITH PROMISES

“**I** KNOW what I want to say, but I don’t know just how to say it, Ward,” said Pond hesitatingly.

Ward could see that he was troubled and embarrassed, but he said nothing in reply. Somehow he was aware that his classmate’s message was not to be a pleasing one, and he was in no haste to urge him on. There was a silence for a minute or two before Pond resumed, and Ward could see that he was greatly troubled.

“It’s leaked out, Ward,” he finally managed to say in a low voice, “where you were last night, and who were with you, and what you were doing. At least some of the fellows know.”

Still Ward made no reply, but he was trembling now. He could not imagine how any one could have learned of the escapade of the preceding evening, but his mind was busy in picturing the possible consequences to him and to the other boys. Already he could hear the sad words of Dr. Gray, and see the pained expression upon Mr. Crane’s face. And then there were his father and mother, and the wretched boy groaned aloud as he thought of them.

“Are you in pain, Ward?” said Pond quickly.
“Can’t I do something for you?”

“No,” replied Ward; “go on with your story. I want to hear it all.”

“I’m not trying to preach to you,” said Pond. “No one knows better than I do that I am not fit to tell another fellow what he ought to do. But, Ward, I can’t understand it. Here you are, able to lead the class if you would only half try, and you’re just throwing everything away as if it wasn’t worth thinking about. You remember the story of Esau, don’t you, Ward? Well, it seems to me that you are selling out cheaper than he did. He got a mess of pottage at least for all his heritage, and I don’t see that you are getting anything for what you are throwing away, except trouble for yourself and for others too.”

Pond’s voice was clear now, but there was a softened expression upon his face which prevented his hearer from becoming angry. Ward knew what it cost Pond to speak as he did, and while he felt hurt, he could not be angered at the words.

At last he managed to say: “It’s all true enough, Pond, old fellow, everything you say. But, after all, you don’t understand it. It’s so easy for you to go straight, you don’t half appreciate what I have to meet. If you did you wouldn’t talk as you do about my selling out so cheap.”

Ward was not the first one who has tried to blame his surroundings for his own failures. Somehow it is so easy to believe that were we some one else, or somewhere else, we could do so much better; our own peculiar trials are so much more difficult to meet than those which come to others. Ward was suffering, but

he had not as yet come to the point where he could honestly face himself, and see that he had no one to blame but himself for his weakness and his failures.

Pond smiled, but ignoring Ward's excuses he said : "No, I don't know all you have to meet, Ward, and I didn't know before that you understood all I had to face either. But all that is neither here nor there. What I can't understand is, why you should be willing to let such fellows as Tim Pickard drag you down with them. They aren't worth your little finger, Ward, and here you are giving yourself to them body and soul ; and they'll never appreciate the gift either, let me tell you."

"Tim's not so bad as he's painted," replied Ward ; and then as he thought of the condition in which he had been when he last saw him, he suddenly became silent. A feeling of disgust swept over him as he thought of Tim, and of himself as his self-constituted defender. When he glanced up he saw that Pond was regarding him intently, and that there was an expression of deep sympathy rather than of blame or anger upon his face.

"Surely, Ward, you would not defend either Tim or yourself for what happened last night," he said.

"You don't mean to say that you think I was drunk too, do you, Pond?" said Ward, suddenly sitting upright in bed and looking eagerly at his friend.

"Not if you say you weren't, Ward," replied Pond quietly. "It was only the report I had, anyway."

"And do they say that I was?"

"Yes," answered Pond in a low voice. "The re-

port is that you, and Tim, and Jack, and one or two other fellows, went over to Dorrfield last night after the retiring bell, and had a supper at the hotel there, and didn't come back until it was almost morning. They say there wasn't one of the party who could walk straight, and that Tim had to be carried up the stairs of East Hall and put into bed."

"It's a lie," said Ward angrily. "There's not a word of truth in it, that is—I mean—you see—I didn't touch a drop, I didn't honestly, Pond. I've been bad enough, I know that, but I haven't got so far down as that, anyway. You will believe me, won't you, Pond?"

Ward was speaking eagerly now, and his headache was forgotten in his desire to make his friend believe what he was saying. He watched him closely as Pond turned quickly and said: "Of course I believe you, Ward, and I can't tell you what a load you've lifted from my mind. I didn't know just what to think at first, for you see not one of the fellows who were at that supper last night showed up this morning at breakfast. They all pleaded a headache, and it was only natural, as you yourself can see, that all the fellows should put them together in the same boat."

"And you'll set that straight, won't you, Pond?" pleaded Ward.

Was it the shame which followed discovery, or sorrow for the wrong he had done which was the more troublesome to Ward?

"I'll do my best," said Pond quietly; but Ward could readily see that he had small hopes of convinc-

ing the school, and certainly all the circumstances were against him. Ward could easily see that, and his heart sank again at the thought.

“How did the fellows find it out?” he finally managed to inquire.

“I don’t know.”

“Does Big Smith know of it?”

“I don’t think he does.”

“He’ll find it out,” groaned Ward; “and then he’ll let all the teachers know, and that’ll be the end of us all.”

“Perhaps not quite so bad as that,” said Pond rising and preparing to go. He was thinking that it might not be the most unfortunate thing for Ward if the teachers should learn of the trouble. It might be the means of bringing him back to himself again, and the generous boy who now was the acknowledged leader of the class, and who knew that if Ward should exert himself he could easily gain that position, did not for a moment allow the thought of his own gain to triumph over his desire for Ward to do better. “Let me know, Ward, if I can do anything,” he added. “You know where I live, and you won’t have to call twice.”

“Thank you,” replied Ward, relieved to find himself again alone, although he fully appreciated Pond’s kindness.

For some time he thought over the startling news he had just heard, and the more he thought of it the more troubled he became. The rumor once started would spread rapidly through the school, and it would be only a question of a brief time before Dr. Gray or

Mr. Crane would hear it. The thought of what would follow was more than he could bear, and he quickly arose and dressed himself.

The friendly feeling Pond had displayed was all forgotten now in his eagerness to be out among the boys and learn for himself what was taking place. He glanced at his watch and saw that it was near dinner time, and unmindful of his headache, he started for the dining hall, toward which he could see the boys making their way.

As he drew near his cheeks flushed when he noticed the glances which were cast at him by many of the students. It was evident that they all knew of the affair now, and when he took his seat in the dining room the boys at his own table made assurance doubly sure. Henry looked at him with ill-concealed disgust, and even Ned Butler, who had always been friendly even when others were disposed to be distant, had little to say to him.

“Very well,” thought Ward bitterly. “It doesn’t make any difference whether I’m guilty or not, they all think I am. I did think I’d start in and do better, but there’s no use in my trying. They’ll all give me credit for the wrong thing every time.”

He said nothing to any of the boys at the table, but as soon as the dinner was finished he started quickly for Jack’s room in East Hall.

Jack was there, and had just brought in Tim’s dinner from Mrs Perrins’. Ward could hardly restrain an expression of disgust when he looked at Tim, and even Jack was sobered and subdued.

"It's all over school, Ward," said Jack; "and they're all giving us credit for having a part of Tim's fun."

"I know it," said Ward bitterly. "We'll all have to pack up now, and it's all Tim's fault, too."

"I'd like to know why I gave the supper," said Tim quickly. "Perhaps, Mr. Hill, you can explain that."

Ward's face flushed, and he made no reply. The supper had been given for him, and now for him to complain of the giver seemed very small. More and more Ward felt how helpless he was, and how he was entangled in the meshes of a net, in the spreading of which he had had his own share.

"I've been thinking over this matter," said Tim soberly, "and it looks to me about like this. The report's going through the school, there's no doubt about that, and it will be a nine days' wonder. I don't know how it got out, but if it hasn't got beyond the boys it will blow over. Of course if the teachers get hold of it, it will be all up with us, or with me, anyway."

"But the teachers will be pretty sure to get hold of it," said Jack soberly.

"I don't know about that," replied Tim thoughtfully. "There's only one fellow who would let on."

"And that is?" inquired Ward.

"Big Smith. Now I've been thinking how we can fix him. I believe the 'Tangs' can shut him up if we set about it. And I've a plan to propose too."

"What is it?" inquired both of the boys eagerly.

“Why not get him up in Ward’s room—that’s right in West Hall, you see—and to-morrow night give him a shake-up? I think we can scare him so that he won’t talk too much.”

“You don’t suppose he’ll keep still till to-morrow night, do you, Tim, if he’s going to tell?” said Jack.

“Very likely not, but some one of the ‘Tangs’ must keep with him all the time and not give him a chance to let on. It’ll be work, but we can do it, and we’ll have to too, if we stay in the school.”

The plan was soon agreed to, and the information quickly spread among the “Tangs.” As a consequence, Big Smith found himself unusually popular. If he started out of West Hall some one of the “Tangs” strangely happened to be there and joined him. If he stopped after a class to talk with a teacher, behold some one of them was by his side with his question also. If he entered Mr. Blake’s room, some one had an errand there at the same time.

As nothing was said by any of the teachers concerning the trouble the boys felt reasonably sure that Big Smith had not told, and that they were still in ignorance.

Soon after supper the “Tangs,” one by one, went over to West Hall and entered the vacant room to which Ward had a key. Mr. Blake was to be kept busy in another building, and they had little fear of being detected, as guards had been stationed at each end of the hall. All were disguised in what they called the “uniform” of the “Tangs,” which effectively concealed their features, and at a quarter before

seven all were present except the guards and Jack who was to bring Big Smith to the room.

“There they are,” whispered one of the boys, as the guard gave the signal, and in a moment Jack and Big Smith were before the door.

Before anything could be said, both of them were pushed within, the door was locked, and Big Smith and Jack were in the center of the strangely dressed circle of boys, Big Smith really, and Jack apparently, gazing in stupid surprise at the company.

“Jack Hobart,” said one of the boys in a disguised voice, “do you promise never to tell any of the faculty about the report which was circulated as to the doings of some of the boys last Saturday night?”

“I do,” said Jack tremblingly, and apparently greatly frightened.

“And do you promise also, Big Smith?” came in the same sepulchral tones.

“Never,” said Big Smith solemnly. “It was a disgrace to the school, and Dr. Gray ought to know of it, and I shall tell him too, to-night. I feel it to be my duty to do so. And I shall also tell him about this business too. The idea of boys being dressed up in nightshirts and with masks on! But I know you. I know every one of you. That’s Tim Pickard, and that’s Ward——”

Big Smith did not complete the sentence, for he was suddenly seized from behind, a bandage was bound tightly about his face, which prevented him from either speaking or seeing, and he was pushed upon a blanket which was held in readiness, and then he was tossed violently

several times against the ceiling. The blanket was then held still, and the leader again put the question: "Will you promise now, Big Smith?"

Big Smith nodded vigorously in the affirmative several times by way of a reply.

"Then drink this," said the speaker, holding a bottle to Big Smith's lips and compelling him to swallow once or twice. The bandage was then removed, and the question again was asked of him.

"Yes, yes, I'll promise. I'll promise. I'll never tell. I won't honestly."

"Big Smith," said the same solemn voice, "if we see any suspicious actions on your part, we shall all go before the principal and declare that you were with us in this room drinking beer," and the speaker held up a bottle as he spoke. It contained nothing but water, but the prisoner was in ignorance of that.

"Oh, don't, fellows, don't! My appropriation will be discontinued if you do. Please don't."

"Beware then, Big Smith! Avoid the appearance of evil and all will be well. Now go," and once released, Big Smith and Jack quickly left the room, and the other boys soon dispersed.

Ward's disgust with the whole affair was not diminished as he went up the stairs to his room. The transaction just ended had been so cowardly and brutal that his better feelings revolted. And yet what could he do? He could not go backward. In his trouble he thought he was compelled to go on to the end as the only way of safety, but he almost groaned aloud as he turned the key in his door and entered the room.

CHAPTER XXX

THE THEFT

IT was a long time before Ward Hill slept that night. What was he to do? What could he do? His thoughts were busy with his experiences thus far in the Weston school, and his entire downward course lay outlined clearly before him; for Ward clearly realized that he had been falling lower and lower, not only in his work, but also in the estimation of his fellows as well, and above all in his own.

Again he thought of the words of Ned Butler in the first conversation they had had, and now he knew what he meant when he had spoken of the decided "yes" and "no," at the very beginning of his course, and how the boys who might lead him into trouble would leave him alone if they knew just where he stood. And Ward was blaming Tim and Jack, and others of the "Tangs" for his own downfall.

If they would only leave him to himself! He only partially realized, or rather only partially acknowledged that he was in any way at fault. And yet even now that decided "no" might aid.

But Ward had not arrived at the point where he was willing to take the decided stand. He was partially realizing, what we all come to know sooner or later, that every one of us is held by the cords of his

own past evil deeds. Whenever he thought of the future and the possibilities that lay within it, his heart sank as he recalled the problems he would have to face. There were the "Tangs," and Tim and Jack, and all his neglect of his studies up to the present time. Whatever uncertainties the future might have, these at least were all sure. His past was accomplished, and whether he wanted to or no, he would be compelled to face it.

"There's no use in trying now," he groaned, "I'm in too deep ever to find my way out. I've just got to go on as I have begun, and what the end of it all will be no one on earth can tell."

This decision of Ward's apparently increased his recklessness. During the remainder of the term, he more and more neglected his work, and out of study hours was almost constantly with Jack or Tim, or some of the "Tangs." The fear of the detection of the stolen feast at Dorrfield passed, as the teachers apparently had not heard of it, and Big Smith had been too thoroughly frightened to report it. The escape, however, served to make some of the boys more reckless than before, and the monotony of the long and dreary winter term was broken by the pranks of the "Tangs," who, although many of the boys knew of their doings, still contrived somehow to escape detection, and became bolder as the weeks went by.

Ward seldom saw Henry now except in the classroom, and there they never exchanged many words. Each boy was somehow blaming the other for the break in their relations, and was too proud to be the first to acknowledge that he had been at fault. Ned Butler

was always pleasant, but he was no longer cordial, and Ward, although he felt keenly the disappointment he knew Ned had, apparently ignored it all, and seldom visited their room. Pond was still the same cordial, manly fellow he had ever been, and while Ward knew he could not be induced to enter into any of the mischief that was going on, he never assumed a distant manner, or seemed to feel his superiority. Big Smith had been somewhat subdued by his experiences with the "Tangs," and studiously avoided their company. He had obtained a heavy chain and padlock, and carefully locked his door, even during study hours.

Pond was the acknowledged leader of the class now, and he was so thoroughly liked and respected, that even those who were next below him never seemed to envy him his honors. Henry, although not a quick student, had, by his diligent and persistent plodding, won a place in the first third of his class and seemed to be well content. But Ward had been slipping lower and lower, and while at times he managed to make a fair recitation, it was always because his quick mind had rapidly seized upon the points presented in classroom, or been brought out by the work of the others, and rarely because he deserved it by his own work.

There were nights when they coasted down the long hills on their "bobs," but Ward was ever in the company of the "Tangs" on such occasions. Ned and Henry had frequently invited him to go with them, for Ned was the owner of one of the most beautiful and fleetest "bobs" in all the school; but when he steadily declined, they soon ceased to ask him.

The same thing was true whenever the boys went skating on the little stream that made its way through the village and which was called by the proud inhabitants "the river." There too, Ward somehow always found himself in the company of Tim and Jack, while Ned and Henry and Pond, with a few congenial friends, went speeding away by themselves. Sometimes Ward would watch them with a great longing in his heart to cut loose from his company and be with them again ; but he was ever farther from the point of deciding. Then the reaction would follow, and he would be one of the merriest in his own company, and the boys would look at him as if they could not quite understand what it all meant. Indeed Ward sometimes detected a troubled look on Jack's face, and he would appear to be about to say something, but somehow the word, whatever it was, was never spoken, and he never knew just what he had thought to say.

Occasionally there were days when Ward would give himself thoroughly to his studies, but these times were not frequent, and the very fact of his long-continued neglect would add to his difficulties and make it the more easy for him to drop his books and enter into the exploits of the "Tangs." There were days too, when he was homesick and utterly wretched, and longed to leave Weston and all its life and temptations behind him and be once more in his old home with his father and mother. It was so easy to do right there. There were no Tim Pickards or "Tangs" in Rockford, and the vision of its peace and quiet appealed strongly to the troubled boy ; but he never wrote home concerning

his feelings. He knew it would be useless, as his father, in spite of his deep love for his boy, would never give his consent to Ward's abandoning his place in Weston.

These experiences were only occasional, however, and as the term dragged on, Ward steadily fell lower and lower, and as the time drew near for the examinations, his fears and forebodings increased with every passing day. There was to be no escape from them, and the days of trial must be met. But how could he ever meet them? His work had been of such a character that only his weakness would be revealed, and then too these examinations counted so much in the making up of the report which would be sent home.

It was only the day before the time when the examinations were to begin, and when Ward was feeling unusually wretched, that he finally was led into one of the most disgraceful of all his experiences in his life at Weston. Jack and Tim had just entered his room, and noticing his downcast manner, at once surmised the cause of it all.

"Well, Ward," said Jack lightly, "the long term is most over now, and you'll soon be with the Rockford folks again. I wish I could be there again myself. I honestly wish I could."

"I wish you could, Speck ; but I wish more that I could accept your invitation to spend the vacation with you in New York. I just dread to be home when the reports come in."

"I don't understand why you can't go with me. It's only turning about, you know, and that's always fair play. Father says I can visit you during the sum-

mer vacation, but there's only a week this spring, you know, and he says mother's been counting the days and almost the hours to the time when the prodigal returns."

"I rather think my going home will be like that of the prodigal this time," said Ward. "Sometimes I can't bear to think of it. I know they'll be so disappointed and feel so bad about it."

"What'll your father do, Ward? Give you a long lecture?" asked Tim.

"No, he won't say much," replied Ward gloomily. "I think I'd feel better if he would."

"Not a bit of it," and Tim laughed. "Not a bit of it. You'll be glad enough to have him drop it. Now my governor is always lecturing me. He gives it to me morning, noon, and night. Why, when I get a letter from him now, I just rip open the envelope and see if there's a check inside. I take that and throw the rest into the waste-paper basket. I know what he'll say just as well as if I had read it. It saves time and some other things too."

Ward looked at Tim a moment, and again a feeling of disgust arose. Never before had his face appeared so coarse and brutal as now. And he was one of his closest friends!

"Cheer up, Ward," added Tim. "You'll fix your governor all right yet. You can doctor the report if you have to."

"I never call my father 'governor,'" said Ward quietly. "I'm bad enough I know, but I'm not so bad as to be disrespectful to him. He isn't to blame

for my failures. He's the best man that ever lived. He'd lay down his life for me, if he thought it would do me any good."

"Beg your pardon, Ward," replied Tim, moved by Ward's earnestness in spite of himself, and revealing for the moment to Ward what his feelings would have been if he had followed that course before. "I'll take it all back. I wish I felt like that toward my governor—my father, I mean—but he's forever lecturing and lecturing, and nagging me. Sometimes I can't stand it, that's all."

"Ward," said Jack soberly, "I'll back you up in all you say about your father. He's the best man I ever saw in all my life. I don't blame you for feeling as you do. But, Ward, that's what makes it all the harder. You'll break his heart by your report this term."

"I know it," groaned Ward; "but it's too late now. I've thrown away all the chances."

"No, you haven't, Ward," said Jack. "I know it's tough, but there's a way out yet."

"What do you mean?" said Ward eagerly. "How can I get out of it?"

"It isn't nice, Ward, but we've got to look it squarely in the face. It's a fact, you have slumped a good deal this term. They expect Tim here and me to be at the bottom, so no one'll be disappointed. But with you it's different. And they are expecting so much from you at home."

Ward looked at Jack as if he only partially understood what he was saying. His wretchedness moved

Jack still more, and he began again : “ Now, Ward, desperate needs require desperate remedies, and I’ll come straight to the point. Mr. Crane usually keeps his examination papers in the desk of his class-room. We’ve taken an impression, and had a key made to fit that lock. Now we intend to-night to get into the room through one of the windows—his room is on the first floor you know—and then we’ll open his desk and copy those questions. That’ll prime us up you see, and your report will be all straight after all.”

Ward was silent a moment before he replied. A great change had come over him, as we know, and he was not so shocked as he would have been three months before by Jack’s proposal.

As he still remained silent, Tim broke in, endeavoring to speak lightly. “ It’s all fair enough, Ward. Teachers are legitimate prey, you know, and they expect we’ll get the best of them every time, if we can. You’ve heard lots of the old boys, when they come back, tell how they fooled ’em ; and the teachers always laugh at their stories with the others. It’s all right enough.”

“ When do you intend to do it ? ” asked Ward at last.

“ To-night after study hours,” replied Jack. “ We three will be the only ones in it. It won’t do to let many in, even of the ‘ Tangs,’ you see. The teachers would all be up to it at once.”

“ I’ll come around and see you after supper and let you know,” said Ward slowly.

“ All right. Ward, you’d better do it. Just think

of your father," said Jack, as he and Tim arose and left the room.

As soon as they were gone, Ward began to walk up and down his room. He could not conceal from himself the wickedness of the proposal. That was only too apparent. But he was in such desperate straits!

And there was his father too. How could he ever face him? Already he could see the grieved and disappointed expression on his face when he read the report. No; Jack was right. Desperate conditions did demand desperate remedies. He would go.

He reported his decision to Jack and Tim, and that night, after the retiring bell, he crept down the winding stairway, unlocked the door of the unoccupied room on the first floor to which, as we know, he had a key, dropped softly out of the window and made his way to the rear of the Latin room.

Tim and Jack soon joined him, and the boys prepared to enter.

"We took good care to see that this window was left unbolted," said Tim. He pushed gently, and the window was soon open.

"Come in both of you," called Tim in a whisper. "We don't want to leave any one on guard. It might attract attention. Be quick about it and come in."

Ward and Jack quickly followed him, and gently closed the window behind them. There was sufficient light to enable them to make their way about the room, and they noiselessly approached the desk. Ward's heart was beating violently, and he was greatly excited, although he managed to be silent.

“Now’s the test,” said Tim, drawing a key from his pocket. “If it doesn’t fit we’re done for.”

He inserted the key, turned it quickly, and lifted the cover.

“Ah, that’s the way to do it,” he whispered gleefully. “Now Jack, for your light.”

Jack drew a small candle from his pocket and quickly lighted it. Before them lay a bundle of papers, and a hasty glance revealed that they were the ones they were in search of.

“Here, each fellow copy a part,” said Tim. “It’ll save time.” He drew some paper from his pocket and immediately each of the three boys was at work copying his portion of the questions. The work required but a few minutes, and then blowing out the light, they noiselessly made their way out and departed for their rooms.

Guilty as Ward felt, he yet rejoiced in his possessions. He looked over the questions he had before he was in bed. Now he could make a good showing after all ; and soon he was asleep. The other portions of the papers were looked over on the following day, and when the class assembled for the examination, Ward’s heart was lighter than it had been in weeks before.

Mr. Crane moved silently about the room, handing each boy a printed copy of the questions. Ward and Jack were in no hurry, and leisurely glanced at the papers the teacher placed on their desks. One glance, however, sent the blood from Ward’s face. In consternation he looked at Jack, whose face was as blank as his own. The questions before them were not those which they had copied the night before.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE VOICE OF WARNING

JACK smiled grimly in response to Ward's despairing look, and both boys at once began to write. There was no help for it now, and they simply must do their best under the circumstances. Some of the questions Ward saw that he could answer, and these he wrote out first. He worked on steadily, and was among the last to leave the room, so desperate was he and so determined to try to gain something in his examination, which would count so much in the report which would be sent to his father within the next few days.

At last he folded his paper, and as he handed it to Mr. Crane he thought he saw a peculiar expression upon the teacher's face. Did he suspect? Ward knew how keen Mr. Crane was, and how thoroughly he understood all the ways of the boys, and his heart sank; but not a word was spoken to him, and he passed out of the room, glad to be rid of the teacher's presence. He thought he had not utterly failed, and hastened back to his room to verify some of the answers he had given.

On the following day the boys left for their brief vacation. Signs of the coming spring were already to be seen, and they all were looking forward with pleas-

ure not only to the break in the school life, but to the fact that when they should return, or soon after, the snow on the hills would be gone, and the dreary portion of the year be ended.

The spring term, so Jack informed him, and so Ward readily believed, was the best of the year. The nine could then be at work again, there would be tramps over the hillsides, the trout in the brooks would be waiting for their coming, and Weston would more than atone for the long and dreary winter term which at last had dragged itself slowly on to the close.

Home again ! The words meant much to Ward now, and not even the dread of the report could rob him entirely of his pleasure. Once more the boys almost filled the car they selected, and as they laughed and sang, Ward was the merriest of them all.

As he came nearer home, however, the thoughts of the failure he had made in all his school work of the term again asserted themselves, and when at last the train drew into the station at Rockford, and he leaped from the platform of the car to greet his father whom he saw waiting for him, it was with a heavy heart that he responded to the warm greeting received.

Two days passed, and then again Ward was returning from the post office with the letter in his hand which he knew contained his report. There was no other letter accompanying it, and there was some relief to be found in that fact, and yet it was with many misgivings that he saw his father open the letter and eagerly look at its contents. As soon as he had read it, without a word he handed it to Ward and quickly left the room.

Ward spread the report on the table and read it. "Poor" in everything. Even his deportment was "poor" also, and he knew that his actions, which he had fondly hoped had not been discovered, because so little had been said about them at Weston, were known. It was a sad record to read, and sadder far because it was a faithful record, although Ward was thinking much more of the former than he was of the latter fact.

He sat for a few moments in silence, creasing the hated report in his hands, and then quickly arose and started to go to Henry's to learn what his record had been. Although their relations were no longer cordial, they yet were sufficiently friendly to make him feel free to do this, and as soon as he entered the parsonage he saw by the expression of pride on the face of good old Doctor Boyd, as well as by that on Henry's face, that they were greatly pleased.

"Henry has an excellent report," said the old man, rubbing his hands together in his pleasure; "a most excellent one. He is marked 'good' in some things, and 'excellent' in others. I trust that your report is equally satisfactory, Ward. It's a pleasure to me to find that my boys have done such credit to their old teacher."

The innocent pride of his old pastor in his own work was very annoying to Ward, and added to the feeling of guilt he could not wholly control, increased his irritation. It was bad enough to be marked "poor" in everything, without being compelled to witness the elation of those who had been more successful than he.

"Oh, my report's all right, I think. I'm not such

a 'dig' as Henry is, and I'm trying to learn something from the school besides what is in books. I'm glad Henry has done so well, though," he added a moment later, his natural generosity soon asserting itself. "He's worked hard, and he's deserved it."

"I'm delighted to hear you say so, Ward," replied Doctor Boyd, beaming benignantly upon him. "Yes, Henry is a good boy, and I feel proud of him. I hardly thought he would take such high rank as you, Ward, and I am the more pleased in consequence."

"Ward could lead the class," said Henry quickly, "if he would only work half as hard as I do. Everybody in the school knows that. He can see through things that are dark to me, no matter how hard I work."

"It's your heart and not your head which speaks now, I'm afraid," replied Ward lightly. He was, however, touched by the evident sincerity of Henry, and his heart grew soft. How he did wish the old times were back again when he and Henry had been like brothers! How different it all was now, and it was all the result of his own fault. Ward realized that, and yet he was not quite willing to acknowledge it freely, even to himself.

He soon arose to go home. He dreaded the next meeting with his father; but it would have to come, and the sooner it was over now the better for all.

Mr. Hill, however, made no mention of the report when Ward entered the house, nor did he refer to it as the days went by. Yet Ward knew that he was deeply grieved, and bitterly disappointed. He had had such

high hopes for him, and they all seemed to be destined to fall. His very silence was harder for Ward to bear than even the words he dreaded would have been.

At last, on the day before his return to Weston, when Ward was walking with his father up the quaint old village street, he realized that this was probably the last opportunity he would have to be alone with him, and with an effort breaking the silence, he said in a low voice: "My report wasn't very good last term."

His father made no reply except to turn and look at him; and that look hurt more than the sharpest words could have done. All his strong love for him was clearly to be seen, but mingled with it was his deep disappointment and the anxiety he felt for his boy.

"I could have done better, I know," said Ward slowly; "but really you don't know how I've been handicapped by the work I did with Doctor Boyd. It set me back a year. Mr. Crane often says his hardest work is to get out of boys what poor teachers have put into them."

"Is Henry's report as bad as yours?" inquired his father quietly.

"Not quite," replied Ward flushing. "But Henry's a regular dig. He just works and works, and does nothing else. He doesn't have much to do with the boys, and I don't think he's very popular."

"Is he respected?"

"Yes, I rather think he's respected," said Ward, his confusion increasing; "that is, by some. But, father, I don't want to promise great things this term."

I'd rather not make a promise, you know, for I might break it."

His father sighed as he listened, and Ward's feeling of uneasiness increased, although he went boldly on and said: "There's one thing I'm going in for though, and that's the prize for speaking. There's a public contest at the close of this term, and all the fellows think I stand a good chance to take it. The 'Tangs—' that is, Jack and Tim, say I'm one of the best speakers in the school. You'd like to have me take that prize, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Hill quietly, but making no further response.

"Well, I shall try for that, and work hard."

He spoke bravely, but he could not fail to see that his father was not very hopeful. Had he lost confidence in his own boy?

Why couldn't he become a little enthusiastic, when he had declared so positively what he was going to do? Ward felt hurt, and in spite of his deep love for his father, he thought he might have shown a little more interest.

Early on the following morning Ward and Henry departed from Rockford to return to Weston. Ward's farewell had been a sad one, for the disappointment and the fears of his father and mother had made them both troubled, and the last good-bye was a silent embrace by his mother, and only a warm pressure of his hand by his father. He was so utterly wretched that it was with almost a feeling of relief he stepped on board the train and left Rockford behind him.

But what lay before him? Weston would present the same temptations he had met, and before which he had fallen. The same problems to be faced, the same boys to be met, and was it to be the same failure? Again and again Ward resolved that he would do better this term, but he was so unhappy that he had little disposition to talk to Henry, who soon accepted the situation and busied himself in reading his paper.

As they came nearer to Weston, and the boys began to flock into the car, their eager faces and noisy ways showed their delight at being together again. Ward soon forgot his ill-humor, and when the lumbering old stage coach—for the snow was gone now and the sleighs had disappeared—left him at the entrance to West Hall, he had recovered his spirits and was returning the welcomes of the boys who had arrived before him, as happy as any of them.

The opening days of the new term soon found Ward back in his old ways. Good intentions and easily made promises never yet have taken the place of sturdy determination and hard work, and he soon found that all his past neglect had made the new work so difficult that he soon relaxed his efforts, and much of his spare time was passed in the company of Jack and Tim.

The pranks of the "Tangs" increased, but as yet nothing serious had occurred. The highest interest of the school now was in the nine, and as soon as the ground settled and was dry, the practice would begin and preparations would be made for the return game with the Burrs. Ward's thoughts were mostly of this coming event, and he strove to persuade himself that

he was thoroughly happy. Weston was beginning to take on its spring garb. The buds were swelling on the trees, the winds which swept down through the valley were warm and balmy now, the brooks would soon be reduced to their normal size, and every day brought its own promise of better things to come.

Henry and Ned Butler had shown a disposition to be more friendly with Ward since their return ; not that Ned ever had been unfriendly, or that Henry had held aloof from him. They had simply let him alone when they had seen that he preferred, or seemed to prefer, the company of the other boys. Ward had been pleased at first, but soon the claims of the "Tangs" and the companionship of Jack and Tim asserted themselves, and once more he found that the boys whose good opinion he really most valued, and whom he most respected, were disposed to leave him to his own and chosen friends ; that is, all but Pond, whose love for Ward was deep and genuine and who never gave up the hope that his better self would yet assert itself.

"I say, Ward," said Jack, as he joined his friend one afternoon, when he was walking across the campus, "the 'Tangs' are going to let loose to-night. We're going to have a high old time."

"What's up now? You fellows must lie awake nights and think up these things."

"We don't have to lie awake. They just come to us like Latin and Greek, and a few other things. But Tim's got a grudge to pay off, and he wants to settle the score to-night. We're going to initiate a fellow without letting him join, that's all."

“Does he want to join?”

“No; he doesn’t even know anything about the honor which is to be conferred upon him.”

“Who is it?”

“That I can’t say. All I know is that it’s some one Tim wants to fix up, and he says it’ll do him a world of good. It’ll be pure missionary work to help straighten him out.”

“All right, I’ll be there,” said Ward, “if you’ll tell me where you’re to meet and when the performance is to begin. Are we to come in uniform?”

“That’s what you are. It’s to be in the same old room in West Hall right after supper to-night.”

The boys parted, and Ward went back to his room. He was not giving much thought to the meeting of the “Tangs.” There had been so many of them of late that the novelty was gone, and his feeling of repugnance had mostly disappeared. There was too a growing carelessness on the part of some of the leaders, and their previous escapes from detection were making them much bolder now.

Soon after supper Ward sought the vacant room and found several of the boys already there. Mr. Blake was to be away for an hour and no one was in the room overhead, so they felt that their presence would not be detected, for they seldom were noisy. Guards were stationed in the hall to give warning of any approaching danger, and as the boys came in, one at a time, the room was soon filled. They donned their uniforms, and in silence waited for the “victim,” as they termed it, to be brought in.

The minutes passed on, but no one came. They were becoming impatient, when suddenly some one said, "Here they are," and Ward looked quickly toward the open door.

There stood Tim and Henry ! The door was closed before the latter could recover from his surprise, and with one violent push Tim sent him into the midst of the circle. As he fell against one boy he was pushed quickly on to another before he could recover himself. The "sport" had just begun, when the entire company was startled by one of their number suddenly calling out, "Here, you stop that !"

The boys looked up quickly. There stood Ward Hill, his mask torn from his face, and looking about him with angry glances.

"What's the trouble now ?" sneered Tim. "What do you mean by interrupting us in this fashion ?"

"I mean what I say. This thing has got to stop. You let him alone," said Ward.

None of the other boys spoke, and then for a moment Ward and Tim were silent also, as they angrily faced each other.

CHAPTER XXXII

ANOTHER LOSS

THE silence lasted but a moment, and then the anger of the boys broke forth and there was a scene of confusion. The purpose of the meeting was forgotten, and the "Tangs" crowded about Tim and Ward, who had not seemed to regard the presence of the others, and had steadily watched each other as if each was afraid of some sudden movement that might result in serious trouble.

"What do you mean?" Tim managed to say at last. "You've turned saint all of a sudden."

"I'm no saint," replied Ward, speaking calmly, in spite of the tumult in his own heart. "No one knows better than I do that I'm not that; but I won't stand by and see a fellow pitched upon by a lot of cowards, or let one fellow call in his gang to help him, when he's too much of a sneak to stand up to the line and settle his score as a decent fellow ought to. You're a coward, and you know it."

"Hit him, Tim!" "Don't stand it!" "Give it to him!" cried some of the boys together, and Tim acted at first as if he was inclined to follow the advice. He advanced a step threateningly, but there was something in the quiet bearing of Ward which seemed to hold him back. Perhaps Ward had spoken truly after

all, and in spite of all his bravado, Tim was too much of a coward at heart to begin an attack on any one who did not appear to be afraid of him.

The assurance that he was not alone, however, seemed to furnish him with the necessary impulse ; but just as he stepped forward, Jack, and two or three of the boys who had remained cool, threw themselves between them, and the trouble which threatened was prevented. There was, however, great confusion in the room, and all of the boys were talking at the same time, some threatening and some striving to prevent an outbreak.

“Your bird’s got away,” said Jack quickly. “Henry’s gone and the game’s up.”

“And I’m going too. I’m done with this crowd forever,” said Ward, quietly removing his “uniform” and starting toward the door which Henry had left open when, taking advantage of the excitement, he had gone out of the room unobserved by any of them.

Ward walked calmly to the door, never even glancing behind him to see what the “Tangs” would do, and in a moment he was in the hall. He hesitated at first, but soon decided to remain by the entrance and await the outcome. He was thoroughly angry, and his heart was beating violently in his excitement, and yet there was a feeling of elation which possessed him and which he thoroughly enjoyed. It was the first time he had taken a firm stand since he had entered the school, and the result was one decidedly pleasurable. His excitement was yet too keen to permit him to take a calm view of what the probable effects of his action would be, but he felt that he was something of a hero,

and his pride was gratified. The "Tangs" soon began to come out of the room, leaving singly or by twos, but they all passed without a word for him, although some of them glanced angrily at him. All but Tim were gone, and just as he came out into the hall, his mask still remaining upon his face, Mr. Blake and Big Smith entered together.

"What does this mean?" asked Mr. Blake in surprise, recognizing Tim at once.

Tim hurriedly tore the mask from his face, and without waiting to reply, made a sudden dash out of the entrance and ran rapidly along the path which led to East Hall.

"Do you know anything of this, Hill?" inquired the teacher, turning to Ward.

"I don't think they have done anything very serious," replied Ward. He spoke quietly, for he was calmer now and felt that he had won. He had compelled the "Tangs" to forego their cowardly treatment of Henry, and he could afford to be generous in his victory.

"This will have to be looked into," said Mr. Blake, as he passed on to his room.

Ward soon went to his room, and when once he was seated by his study table, the full force of what he had done came over him. He had broken with the "Tangs," and it was with a feeling of relief that he realized that. But what would be his position in the school now? Time only could show, and sooner than he dreamed he learned what that was to be.

At the breakfast table on the following morning

Henry and Ned Butler merely nodded to him, and that was all. Not a word did they say to him, and Ward soon realized that they had broken off all their friendly relations with him.

He left the hall alone and filled with bitter thoughts. That was a great way to show gratitude, he thought. Henry ought to realize what he had saved him from. And it really had been a very generous action, he persuaded himself. He had broken with the "Tangs" and cut loose from all his friends, and for what? Just to save Henry from the punishment which Tim Pickard had wished to visit upon him. And this was all the appreciation Henry had of such a sacrificing act! Very well, he could stand it if Henry could. He had done a great thing for him, and if he did not care to recognize it, he would try to show that he cared little about it.

His trials, however, were to be multiplied, as he soon learned. When he met some of his former associates not one of them recognized him, save by a look of dislike. Even Jack was very cool and had almost nothing to say to him. Ward felt that he was almost alone in the school. Henry and his friends were against him too, because they had not fully realized what it was that Ward had done, and had only known that he was one of the company which had tried to haze him.

On the other hand, all the "Tangs" were angry because he had interfered with their plans and had openly declared that he would have nothing to do with them any more.

If that was to be the result of trying to do right,

Ward thought, it did not pay very well. There were even moments when he almost regretted what he had done. He felt bitter and discouraged. His very first attempt to do right had plunged him into what he regarded as the most serious trouble of his life, for what boy can bear the ill-will of his fellows? The story had spread quickly through the school, and to Ward's sensitive feelings it seemed as if every boy in the school had turned against him; that is, all but Pond, who took especial pains to be friendly and to show his confidence in many quiet ways.

Bitter as this experience was, there were things harder to be borne in store for him.

"Three of the fellows have resigned from the nine," said Jack to him the next morning on their way to the Latin room. He was angry, and took no pains to conceal his feelings.

"Who are they?" asked Ward quietly. He felt that he knew who they were, but he couldn't prevent the question falling from his lips.

"Ned Butler, Henry, and Sam Allen," said Jack. "The nine's up for this year. No game with the 'Burrs.'"

Ward made no reply. He knew why these boys had left the team. They did not wish to be on it if he was. There was one way out of that, he thought bitterly, and he could and would take it. That same afternoon he wrote Tim Pickard a note resigning his position. It was a hard experience for the impulsive boy. No one of the players had been so enthusiastic as he. No one cared more for the good-will and good

opinion of his fellows. Indeed, praise was almost necessary to Ward, for instead of making him feel unduly elated, it acted as a stimulus. He had felt that if he had only gained a high rank at the beginning in his class-work it would have been much more easy for him to have maintained it, for he would have felt the impulse of success behind him. How different it all was now ! He had slipped steadily lower and lower in his class-room work, and now apparently he had lost the friendship of all the boys in the school. And for what ? Just for Henry, who did not have the grace to appreciate what had been done for him. He felt thoroughly angry at him now. If he had it all to do over again he would leave him to his fate.

Still further bad news awaited him. Two days afterward Jack said to him :

“ Tim’s left school ! ”

“ Tim left school ! What for ? ”

“ He had a letter from his father yesterday. Dr. Gray had written him that he must take Tim out of the school, that he had been caught trying to haze some of the fellows, and that was the last straw, the doctor said. He must take him out quietly, or they would be compelled to expel him publicly.”

Ward made no reply. Once more he realized, or thought he realized, that it was through him this new trouble had come. Tim was the best pitcher in the school, and the loss to the nine would be blamed upon him, and perhaps justly.

“ Yes, he’s gone ; and though it isn’t to be known that he’s expelled, I thought I’d tell you about it.

His father wrote him a terrific letter, told him how completely disgusted he was with him, and how little he seemed to appreciate all that was being done for him. He threatened to put him into the machine shop or something of that kind and make him learn the trade. Just imagine Tim Pickard with a greasy apron on and his hands and face all black and grimy," and a faint smile crept over Jack's face as he spoke.

"I suppose he blames me for it all, doesn't he?" inquired Ward softly.

"Yes; and so do all the fellows, and so do I."

"Oh, Jack!" was all the reply Ward made. He felt almost crushed now. If he did right, he was blamed, and if he did wrong it seemed to make but little difference; he was blamed in either event. He had not had sufficient experience yet to enable him to look calmly at the events through which he was passing and see them in their true light. The prejudice and feelings of the boys were but natural, or the results of natural mistakes, and Ward himself had not yet come to the time when he could know that the cause of the most of his sorrow lay not in the fact that he had entered upon evil ways, but that evil ways had brought him inevitably into trouble.

From this time a shadow seemed to rest over all the school. The nine had been broken up, and the game with the "Burrs," to which the school had looked forward all the year, was abandoned. And somehow the name of Ward Hill was linked with it all. He felt that he was blamed, and although he knew that he was blamed unjustly, he suffered none the less under its

penalty. There were times when he longed to go to Henry and explain exactly the true situation, but his false pride held him back, and the word was not spoken. Jack came occasionally to his room, but none of their interviews were very satisfactory. There was an air of constraint over both. Nothing was said now about Ward's leaving his room in West Hall and going over to share Jack's in East. And how confidently Jack had declared that as soon as Tim was gone Ward should be his room-mate. All those days were over now.

Pond remained true and strong, however, and many were the long walks over the hills which he and Ward took together. And yet Ward did not thoroughly enjoy them, for he was suspicious that Pond was pitying him and trying to be more friendly because of his evident loneliness. As a consequence, Ward took many a long tramp by himself.

In this he had a double end in view. The first was his desire to be alone, and the second was the one purpose which had been growing stronger as the spring days went by. This was his determination to take the prize in the contest which would occur during the last week of the term. He had been recognized as one of the best speakers in the school, and he was determined to redeem himself now if such a thing were possible. There were to be ten contestants, and he felt confident that he would be one, and many an hour he spent in the woods far from the school practising the selection he had chosen.

How proud his father would be if he should take the

prize ! Already he could see the expression upon his face when his name should be announced as the winner. He appreciated his father's love now more than ever he had done ; but not yet was Ward in the true position where he belonged, for as the days passed he was doing no better in his studies. To make up for all he had lost would require a great effort ; and Ward, with his lonely position in the school, and feeling the injustice which was being done him, had not yet settled down to the steady line of duty, which after all has been said, is the greatest test of life.

So the weeks went by, and as the end of the term came nearer his thoughts and efforts were more and more concentrated upon his declamation. He must win that prize. He wrote of it in his letters home, and it was finally settled that his father and mother were to be present, and to come with the father of Henry to Weston for the closing days. Henry as well as Ward had been among those selected in the "preliminaries," as the trial contest was called, and the event was to be one of the greatest of the entire school year.

Henry had worked steadily on in his classes, and while he had not been able to gain such a standing as Pond, who was the acknowledged leader, he still had a good position and was content.

The time of the final examinations at last arrived and Ward knew he had done poorly, but he was not prepared for the blow which came the day after they were ended.

Dr. Gray arose in the chapel, after the morning ex-

ercises, and began to speak. He told of his satisfaction in the progress of many of the boys, the hopes he had of the graduating class, and his feeling of sorrow for those who had failed to do justice to themselves, to their parents, and to their teachers.

Ward listened indifferently. He had become accustomed now to "lectures," and to look upon himself as one who could have done if he had tried. "He had the ability, but had not worked." His attention, however, was arrested in a moment by the doctor's words. He was reading the list of the contestants for the prize for declamation on the following evening. Name followed name, and still Ward did not hear his own called. The ten names at last were all read off, and Ward Hill's was not among them.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CONTEST

FOR a moment Ward sat almost stunned by the words which he had just heard. His name was not on the list of speakers. All his long labor had been for naught. And how hopefully he had written home, and how confident he had been that he would redeem himself in a measure and would still do something of which his father would feel proud, and which in a measure would compensate him for the bitter disappointment Ward knew he had suffered from his failures of the year. His year had been a failure in large measure ; even Ward could not conceal that fact from himself. He noticed a glance of deep sympathy and disappointment from Pond, but he was too nearly heartbroken to respond. He had never felt so utterly crushed before in all his life.

The doctor's words were ended now, and Ward realized that the boys were passing out of the chapel. His seatmates crowded past him eager to join the outgoing throng and giving but slight heed to Ward, who had not risen as he usually had done and been among the first to leave. Still he sat in his seat, almost dazed and hardly realizing what was going on about him.

Dimly conscious as he was of the bustle and stir among the students, he was fully aware of the pain and despair

in his own heart, and at last, when nearly all had gone out, he suddenly started toward Dr. Gray, who was yet lingering near the platform.

“Dr. Gray, wasn’t there some mistake? My name wasn’t in the list of those who are to speak this evening for the prize. Won’t you please look again and see if it isn’t there?”

The principal turned quickly as he heard the voice of the heartbroken boy who could scarcely hold back a sob, and at once recognizing him, placed his hand gently upon Ward’s shoulder, and speaking in a voice of deep sympathy said: “No, my boy. There’s no mistake. Your name is not there.”

“But why not, doctor?” pleaded Ward. “I’ve done well in my declamations all through the year, and the fellows all say they think I’m one of the best speakers in the class.”

“There is no doubt about that. But, Hill, you know of the rule that does not permit any one to speak for the prize if he fails to pass his class examinations, don’t you?”

“Yes,” replied Ward. “Didn’t I pass my final examinations, doctor?”

“No,” answered Dr. Gray quietly. He said no more, and in a moment Ward turned and walked slowly down the aisle and out of the chapel. There were to be no examinations on that day, as the three remaining days of the week were to be given up to the closing exercises of the school. Ward rejoiced that he was to be left to himself for a time at least, and he quickly resolved to go up to the “glen,” a beautiful and lonely

spot on the side of one of the hills, where many a time he had been before, but under what different circumstances. He had been unconscious of the long look with which Dr. Gray had followed him as he walked slowly down the aisle, nor had he seen how the good man's face grew soft and his eyes filled with tears as he watched him until he had passed beyond his sight. "It's hard," murmured the doctor; "and I can only hope the lesson may not be entirely lost."

Ward walked rapidly along the dusty road and soon began to climb the hillside. The summer sun was high in the heavens now and the landscape was all soft and mellow under its beams. As he gradually climbed upward, below him he could see the winding streams, the farmers at work in their fields, and far away rose the spires of the school buildings above the mass of green which concealed all else from his view.

But the peacefulness of the outer scene found no response within the troubled heart of Ward Hill. As soon as he arrived at the spring, which lay in the center of the glen, he threw himself wearily upon the ground, and casting the little pebbles which he had gathered in his hand, one by one into the water, he began to try to think calmly of the things he must face.

The more he thought the more miserable he became. In his mind he went over all the experiences of the year, his disappointment in not being able to enter the fourth year, his determination to do his best in the class to which he had been assigned, his gradual but sure neglect of his work, and the outcome of his associations with the "Tangs." And uppermost in his

thoughts was that expression Ned Butler had used the very first night he had met him, and how he had told him, as the result of his own experience, that the whole matter of success or failure at Weston would turn almost entirely upon his ability to use those little words, "yes" or "no" at the very beginning of his course. Ward had not used them.

He could see it all, to a degree at least, now. All the long list of failures might have been avoided if he only had been decided at the first. He thought of Pond. What a fine fellow he was! So quiet and yet so firm, he had held himself steadily to his work, and yet had been one of the most popular fellows in all the school. Then Ward thought of the position which he himself occupied in the school, quietly avoided by most of the boys whose good opinion he most valued, and openly disliked by the most of those who had been his companions. Even Henry, with his plodding ways, was far in advance of him. He was not a boy who had made many close friends, and yet he had a few, Ned Butler, for example; and Ward knew that he was thoroughly respected by all the school.

Perhaps his bitterest thoughts were of Jack. The generous, open-hearted boy, disposed to shirk all hard work and yet, although easily led, never inclined to anything mean or small, had appealed to him as had few of the boys in the school. And even Jack had turned against him now.

The hours slowly passed and still Ward lingered in the glen. He was alone with his own thoughts, and while they were not good company, he was, for the first

time in his life, coming to look upon himself and them in their true light.

When at last he arose to return to Weston, it was long after the dinner hour, but Ward thought little of that. Hunger had not troubled him, and he had hardly been conscious of the fact that much of the day was gone. Soon the stage would come, and on it would be his father and mother. How could he meet them? Yet meet them he must. There was no escape from that now.

When Ward entered the village he saw that already many of the visitors, who thronged Weston during the closing days of the school, had arrived. There were old and gray-headed men, who many years before had been students in the school and had now returned to revisit the scenes of their early days. There were boys with their fathers and mothers and sisters and younger brothers, these last perhaps looking with curious eyes about the school buildings and grounds, and eagerly awaiting the time when they too should be enrolled among the boys of the Weston school. And every one seemed to be so happy. The sight was more than the unhappy Ward could bear, and rushing up to his room he threw himself upon the bed in a fresh outburst of despair.

There was one comfort, and that was that he would not be compelled to meet the other boys at the dining hall that night. His father and mother would soon be there, and he would take his supper with them at the hotel, where already rooms had been reserved for them. But that meeting with them! How could he ever bear

it? Bear it, however, he must, and the time would soon be there.

As the dusk drew on Ward went up to the hotel and waited for the coming of the stage. He avoided the other boys who were there on a similar errand, and slowly paced back and forth along the piazza, trying vainly to think of something he could say to his father. Nothing however had suggested itself when at last the old stage-coach came within sight. It was loaded with passengers, and he thought bitterly of his own first ride into Weston. There was some difference between the Ward Hill he then was and the Ward Hill he now saw himself to be.

The coach stopped at East Hall, and he saw several men leap down as if they were boys again. Then the stage made another stop at West Hall, and at last it was coming directly toward the hotel.

It stopped before the high steps, and there was a rush by the waiting boys toward the passengers, although Ward lingered on the outskirts of the crowd. He saw Ned Butler suddenly grasp a broad-shouldered man, whom Ward at once concluded must be his father, about the neck and kiss him as if he were a little fellow. His own eyes were moist, for he knew the welcome he had to give would be of a far different character. There was Dr. Boyd, and Henry had seized upon him in a moment, and yes, there too were his own father and mother. Travel-stained and evidently tired by their long journey, there yet was an eager expression upon their faces as they looked about them for their boy.

“Here I am, mother,” called Ward, and in a mo-

ment he was folded within her embrace and had welcomed his father. How good it seemed to be with them again ! How strong their love was ! He almost groaned as he thought of what he had to tell them. What a change it would make, and they were so happy now and their welcome was so warm. He quickly took their bags and led the way to their room. As soon as they had entered and closed the door, his mother again took his face within her hands and kissed him, just as Ward remembered she used to do when he was a little boy at home. How could he bear it ?

Holding him out at arm's length to look at him again, his mother suddenly said : " Why, Ward, you look ill ! Are you sick ? " She spoke anxiously, and for a moment he could not reply.

At last he recovered himself, and in a trembling voice said : " Yes, I'm sick, sick at heart, anyway. I never was so wretched and unhappy in all my life before. "

" What is it, Ward ? " It was his father who spoke, and Ward knew that the time which he had been dreading had arrived.

" Oh, father, I'm not to speak to-night. My name's not on the list. "

" Why not ? "

" I failed in my examinations, and they won't let a fellow speak then. "

" Oh, Ward ! " was all the reply his mother made, while his father remained silent. But Ward could see that his face was very pale and there was a look of deep pain upon it. A silence of several moments followed,

Ward trying to think of something in the way of an excuse, and then his father said : " Well, Ward, you may go down and wait for us. We'll be down soon."

Ward walked slowly out of the room and quietly closed the door. The word had been spoken at last. With all his remorse there yet was a feeling of relief, but the pain of his father and mother had only begun. In a few minutes they came down the stairs, and as Ward joined them he could see that his mother had been weeping. They entered the dining room together, and as soon as they had been seated, Ward looked about him at the inspiring scene. What happiness was written everywhere ! Boys with their parents and friends ! and the delight at meeting again was apparent on every side. Near him were Ned and his father, and Henry and Dr. Boyd, and how proud the men were. Ward glanced for a moment at his own father and mother, and realized what a difference there was. And they too might have been as glad and proud as any in the room. And why were they not ? Ward knew only too well.

Soon after supper, the people began to make their way toward the village church in which the contest was to take place. Ward and his parents went with the others, and were assigned seats in the middle of the house. He was utterly wretched and would not have come had not his father insisted upon it. There was a buzz of interest and excitement in all the audience. There was music too, to enliven the occasion, and when Dr. Gray at last arose to announce the first speaker, the building was filled to its utmost capacity.

Big Smith was to speak first. Conscious of himself and with his deepest and most sepulchral tones, he began to recite the speech of Regulus to the Carthaginians. His deep tones and sing-song utterances soon became monotonous ; but Big Smith was unabashed by the smiles that soon could be seen in various parts of the audience, and when applause was given him at the close, he returned and bowed, and then left the platform in a state of great elation.

Pond followed him in a speech that was simple and unpretentious, and while every one listened attentively, Ward was hardly prepared for the burst of applause that followed him as he too left the platform.

Henry was the next to speak, and Ward sat watching his father, who could not conceal the pride and satisfaction he felt. Ward was too bitter to note how well Henry was doing, and indeed scarcely listened to the seven speakers that followed.

At last the contest was ended, the judges retired to prepare their decision, and Dr. Gray arose to announce the other prizes of the school year. He was listened to with close attention, applause following each announcement. Pond had received the prize in his class, and Ward joined in the general approbation.

“ Here they come,” he heard some one near him whisper, and glancing up, saw the judges returning to the platform. An intense silence followed the words of Dr. Gray as he said : “ We will now listen to the decision of the committee ; Judge Butler, the chairman, will make the announcement.”

Ned’s father said but few words by way of introduc-

tion, merely stating the different points which the committee had marked, and then said : “ For naturalness, simplicity, clearness, and the bringing out of the meaning of the selection chosen, the committee is unanimous in awarding the first prize to ”—he hesitated a moment and the silence became intense—“ to Russell Pond.”

A loud burst of applause greeted him, and then he went on : “ The committee were not of one mind as to the second prize, but by a majority vote that prize is awarded to—Henry Boyd.”

The applause was renewed, but in milder form ; and as soon as the last words had been pronounced, the audience, still buzzing with excitement, began to pass out.

Ward would gladly have been among the first to go, but his father quietly insisted upon remaining, though for what purpose he could not determine. Ward stood and watched the people as they passed him. They all were discussing the award, and for the most part seemed to agree with the judges. About half of them had gone, when Ward saw Big Smith coming down the aisle with a large, pompous man whom he had no difficulty in recognizing as his father. He was gesticulating violently and talking in a loud voice.

“ Those judges know no more about oratory than—than—than an old cow.”

Ward laughed outright. It was the first time in several days that he had done such a thing, and he was sorry the moment it was done. Big Smith was in front of him, and turning quickly about said angrily : “ You needn’t laugh, Ward Hill. I got on to the list

anyway, and I didn't get conditioned in my examination, if I didn't take this prize, which I deserved."

"He ought to have had it; he earned it; he was the best speaker on the list," added the senior Smith in a voice louder than before; and the humiliation which Ward had felt at Big Smith's words was in a degree lightened as he saw an amused smile creep over his own father's face.

"Here, Ward, you take your mother back to the hotel. Here comes Dr. Gray, and I want to speak to him," said his father when he saw the principal approaching.

Relieved at the prospect of being freed from the crowd, Ward eagerly led the way, and with his mother started down the aisle. He stopped a moment by the door, and looking back saw his father and Dr. Gray standing together and talking earnestly, the principal holding fast to his father's hand. With a sinking heart he realized that doubtless he himself was the subject of their conversation.

CHAPTER XXXIV

CONCLUSION

WARD'S surmise was correct, and for a long time the two men stood and talked about his life and work during the school year at Weston. As Dr. Gray and Mr. Hill had been schoolboys together, the old friendship asserted itself, and their conversation was free and confidential, such as can be had only by those whose friendship has been a matter of years. And after all has been said, it is still true that the friendships of early life are almost the only ones capable of being formed, for as men grow older they easily make acquaintances, but seldom make friends.

Dr. Gray tried to be entirely frank, and while he confessed his bitter disappointment over Ward's failure, he still was not entirely hopeless concerning his future.

"I'll tell you what it is, Hill," said the doctor, taking his friend by the arm familiarly, as he had done in the bygone years, when at last they had started to leave the building, "I'm not excusing the boy. He has enough to answer for; he knows that, and so do you and I; but I must tell you frankly, that I don't think his father has been entirely free from blame."

"What do you mean? I've always tried to do my best for the boy."

"As you saw it, yes. But sometimes the most

troublesome cases in our school are not those which come from the indifferent homes, but from what are considered the best. Where you have been weak is in this : you have kept your boy carefully from all evil, and that is right. I say no word against that, you understand. But there is a vast difference between keeping him from evil and training him to meet it. Ignorance is not strength, and Ward has done what I have seen others do, that is, go to pieces when he has been left free to decide for himself. Before he came here he did right because his father decided for him. Since he has been here, he has done wrong because he has not decided for himself."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Mr. Hill slowly, as he grasped his friend's hand. They were standing before his house now and were about to part. "Good-night," added Mr. Hill.

"Good-night," replied the doctor. "Remember you all are to dine with us to-morrow night."

Mr. Hill soon rejoined Ward and his mother, whom he found sitting at one end of the long piazza of the hotel. The air of the summer night was warm, and for some time they sat there in silence watching the busy throng of young people and their elders who were walking on the piazza or standing together and chatting gayly about the events of the evening. It was a beautiful and stirring scene and Ward felt his disgrace the more keenly because he had no share in it all. If he had only kept steadily to his work he too would have been one of the happiest of them all, instead of sitting silent and alone with his parents, only too glad to

escape all observation ; and they too would not have felt the disgrace of his failure. But Ward was now blaming himself alone for it all, and perhaps the lesson would not be entirely lost, although all the benefits he might have gained from the year were gone beyond recall.

“ I’ve just had a long talk with Dr. Gray,” said Mr. Hill at last breaking the silence.

Ward made no reply. It was the first time his father had spoken of his failure, and he must bear it as best he could. He could perceive, however, from the tones of his father’s voice that he was in distress, and Ward felt that his own cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing.

“ Yes,” resumed Mr. Hill, “ he has been been bitterly disappointed in you, Ward, as we all have been. We had counted so much upon your success, and he says the general verdict of the school is that you could have done well. Now it rests with yourself, Ward, whether you go on or not. I have not the means to squander on you, my boy, and do not care to push you on unless you care to go. Not that I shall not stand by your side, Ward ; I shall do that always. If you were to be led to the gallows, the last face you would see on earth would be your father’s. I do not mean to reproach you, my boy. Doubtless you are suffering as much, or more, than any of us. It is only a question of what you decide to do.”

Ward started to reply, but soon found that he could not control his voice. He hastily grasped his father’s hand, and after kissing his mother, ran quickly down the steps and started for his room in West Hall. It

had been in his heart to confess it all to his father, and promise to do better. But what good would a promise do? He had promised confidently many times before, and where were all his good words now? No; it was better not to say what he would do, but to show by his actions that he was now in earnest.

The long hours of the night passed, but sleep would not come to Ward. Again and again all his failures came trooping up and stood before him. Was it true that he was bound to make a failure of life? Was success never to be his? And then too, there was the last word of his father that "he should stand by him to the end." But he would suffer none the less if he did cling to him. And what a return he was making for all the love and sacrifice of such a father and mother as he had!

He saw it all now. All his neglect, his cowardice, his lack of decision, his selfishness, all stood out before him. What could he do? Was there no one to help him? Suddenly he thought of Mr. Crane. How he had neglected all his advice and offers of aid. There was no one of the teachers whom he respected more. Would he help him now? He would go to him in the morning and tell him all. Perhaps he would still be willing to listen; and with this thought, Ward at last fell asleep.

After his breakfast the next morning he hastened to the hotel. His father and mother were waiting for him, for he was to show them his room and about the school grounds. In the afternoon there was to be an address, and in the evening a concert.

As soon as Ward had led the way and shown them all there was to be seen, he excused himself and started for the room of Mr. Crane. His heart was beating violently and his good resolution almost failed, but summoning all his courage, he at last rapped so loudly upon the door, that Mr. Crane quickly opened it, almost startled at the loud summons.

"Oh, good-morning, Hill," he said pleasantly. "You almost upset me by your knock."

"Are you busy, Mr. Crane? If you are, I'll come some other time."

"Not too busy to see you. Come in, Hill," and the teacher led him into his private class-room.

"I've come," said Ward, determined to have the matter out at once, "to tell you all about it." He glanced up and saw that Mr. Crane was regarding him quietly, but the expression on his face was not forbidding, and Ward went on. He told the story of his school life from the beginning, as if Mr. Crane had no knowledge of it. He did not mention any of the names of the boys, but he related how he had joined the "Tangs," and entered into many of their pranks. He put forth no excuses for himself, and did not even mention some of his better deeds. His failures, his weakness, his neglect—all came out in the course of his rapid and almost incoherent story, and then at last he said: "And there's one thing more, Mr. Crane." The teacher was still silent, and without looking at him, Ward said: "I tried to steal the examination papers last term too."

"I knew that," replied Mr. Crane quietly.

“You knew it?” asked Ward in surprise.

“Yes. I was standing by my window that evening, and suddenly saw a light in the Latin room. It flashed into my mind at once what was going on, and when I saw three boys creep out of the window, then I knew. I saw you all as you went around the corner.”

“And you never told of it, Mr. Crane!” said Ward again, with increased surprise.

“No,” said Mr. Crane softly. “I don’t know that I did right; but I was hoping all the time for better things.”

“And you were only disappointed after all,” said Ward with something that sounded very like a sob.

“And I was only disappointed after all,” repeated the teacher quietly.

There was a silence for a moment and then Ward said: “Now, Mr. Crane, you know it all. I haven’t kept back a thing. It’s too late now to do any good, for I don’t know what I shall do next year, but I didn’t feel that I could go home till I had made a clean breast of it to you.”

“Well, Hill, it’s a sad story, though I can’t say I’m sorry you told me, though you haven’t told me much that I didn’t know before. I don’t know just how you feel, for I haven’t been in the same place. Perhaps it’s no credit to me, and yet I can say it. The disappointment and suffering of your father and mother any one can see.”

“Don’t, oh, don’t, Mr. Crane!” groaned Ward dropping his head upon the table and sobbing aloud.



"What is that, Mr. Crane?" said Ward, looking up.

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Mr. Crane watched him silently a moment, and Ward could not see that his own eyes were moist ; but when the sobbing boy became a little more quiet, he said : “ I’m not reproaching you, Hill. Who am I to do that? I only want to help you, that is all. But there is one thing you said which is not true.”

“ What is that, Mr. Crane ? ” said Ward looking up in surprise and pain.

“ What you said about your next year. You do know what you’ll do, or I at least do, I’m sure.”

“ No, I don’t, Mr. Crane,” pleaded Ward. “ My father said he’d always stand by me, but that he should not send me on through school or college unless I cared to go.”

“ Of course he won’t send you on any other condition. But there is to be no other, Hill.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ Only this. You have now for the first time come to yourself. You see what you’ve done, just as it is. Now what you are going to do, Hill, is just this. You are going to study up during the summer, and pass your examinations when you come back and go on with your class.”

“ Do you think I can ? ” Ward had risen in his eagerness and stood facing his teacher.

“ I know you can, and it’s just what you must do.”

“ I’ll—— ” Ward started to promise, but quickly recalling how many times he had promised before, his face flushed and he became quiet.

“ I know,” said Mr. Crane quietly. “ I know what you would say. Now write me just as often as

you please, or need, during the summer, and count on me as your friend every time."

"Thank you," said Ward quietly taking the proffered hand. "Good-bye, Mr. Crane."

"Good-bye, Hill," and Ward hastened out of the building with a new light on his face and a new glow in his heart. Mr. Crane would help him! He felt stronger already.

He saw Jack coming up the street, and his heart sank again. Could he ever come back to Weston again with all the boys against him? If he could only go to some other school and start afresh there, the problem would be so much more easy.

"I say, Ward, I want to see you," said Jack as he approached.

"What is it, Speck?"

"I must get this thing off my mind. I've been all broken up. The truth is, Ward—I—I—haven't just done the square thing by you. I didn't mean to go back on you, but somehow I was just pushed into it. I want to know if you'll call it all square now?"

"It's been all square, Jack," replied Ward. "I had no one to blame but myself."

"No, I'm to blame too, Ward. I had no business to keep still, and I've told Ned and Henry all about it too, and I think they feel better. And Ward, I want you to come and visit me this summer, will you?"

"I can't," replied Ward quietly. "I didn't pass my examinations, and if I come back—I don't know yet whether I shall or not—but if I do, I've got to

work all summer. I thank you just the same, Jack," he added hastily, seeing the look of disappointment on his face.

"I was lucky enough to get through this year," replied Jack ; "but, Ward, you'll come back, won't you? Don't fail, old fellow! It'll break my heart if you don't come. And you'll room with me too, won't you, Ward? I'm going to try and do better next year, and I want you to help me."

Ward smiled at the thought of his helping Jack, but he said : "No, Speck ; if I do come back, I'm going into the old room and try to face the whole thing. Perhaps I sha'n't come, though," he added thoughtfully.

"You must come, Ward. Now write me this summer. I've got to leave on the next stage. Promise me you will. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Jack ; I'll write," and then the boys clasped hands for a moment, each noticing a new light in the other's eyes.

The dinner at Dr. Gray's was not very enjoyable to Ward, but he went as in duty bound. Henry and his father were there, but the boys excused themselves early in the evening and went over by the chapel. They said but little to each other, although Ward thought he detected a change in Henry and a desire to speak of something which he thought he knew ; but the word was not spoken, and when they came near to the chapel steps they saw a crowd of the boys assembled there. Seated on the higher steps were the forty boys of the graduating class. In a moment they broke into

a song, and for an hour sang on together. It was the custom of the school, and each year the graduating class had its final "sing" on the evening preceding the exercises of the last day.

Ward listened but could not join in the songs. To him there was something indescribably sad in it all. Would he be there next year? And these fellows with whom he had been associated for a year now were to leave, and all the old associations were to be broken.

At last the hour closed and the forty boys, their enmities and rivalries all forgotten now, stood up, and clasping hands and standing in a circle sang "Home, Sweet Home." Ward was listening, and yet only partially hearing it all. His own heart was tender now, and the failure of the year was not forgotten. Soon the voices were hushed as they took up the last stanza, then the song drew to its close, the school cheer was given, and the class broke up its last meeting.

Ward said nothing to his parents of his interview with Mr. Crane when he went up to the hotel for them to go to the concert. He was strangely silent the next day too during the final exercises. He knew that Ned had done well and all had applauded him, but that was about all.

He was startled when a little later some one slipped quietly into the seat beside him, and looking up he saw Ned Butler. "Ward," said Ned, "I'm going soon; but I wanted to say to you that I've been wrong."

"No, Ned," replied Ward quietly; "I was wrong, and I know it now."

"You're coming back next year?"

"I don't know. I can't tell yet."

"Come, Ward. Take hold as we all know you can. And then next year you'll be coming up to college where I am. Come, Ward. Good-bye, old fellow."

"Good-bye," whispered Ward, grasping his hand for a moment.

The day was over at last and the people were departing. Ward bade each teacher farewell, even seeking out Mr. Blake, whom he had neither liked nor respected. He did not appear like the Ward of old, and time only could show whether the purpose which was in his heart would be carried out.

Pond had already gone, and his last words had been in extracting a promise from Ward to write him during the summer.

Early the following morning Ward too was to go, and before sunrise Ward assisted his father and mother into the stage and then clambered up on top. Beside him sat Big Smith, and he was inclined to draw back at first, but thinking better of it, he took his seat beside him.

"I say, Ward," said Big Smith, "are you coming back next year?"

"I don't know."

"Neither do I. My father says I was robbed of that prize. I don't want to be in a school where they rob you in that way."

Ward was not listening. The stage had just reached the top of the hill, and he looked back for the last view of Weston. The sun was just appearing upon the eastern sky and all the valley was bathed in its glory.

Above the foliage appeared the towers and spires of the Weston school. There he had met his defeats and formed his friendships and made his failures. And yet what a year it had been! The sunlight seemed to cover it all, and Ward's heart became tender under its influence. Behind him lay the valley. Far away was the Hump, and the Glen could be seen almost like a scar on the hillside. And he was leaving it all behind him now. Failure, disgrace, confession, promise—all were behind. Was the best of life there too?

With a sigh Ward turned as the valley disappeared from sight, and full on his face fell the beams of the rising sun.

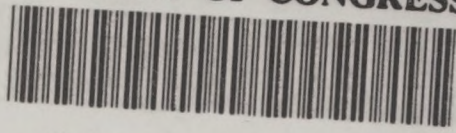
For those who have been interested in following the events of Ward Hill's life at Weston during his first year in the school, and who perhaps would be pleased to follow his course still farther, we may say that a record of what he did has been made and will appear in a book which will be called: **WARD HILL, THE SENIOR.**

Whether he kept his promise, what his experiences were, who were the new friends he made and the old friends he retained, his failures and falls, his successes and rewards, his rivalries and adventures, are all recorded there; and doubtless as he has been willing for us to follow him thus far in his career, he will make no serious objection to any who may care to accompany him still farther.





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